

Renewing The Heavenly Subscription • Mat. 6:9-13

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Magazine Subscriptions

1. A few years ago, I was getting ready to board a plane to fly home.
2. There is little more boring than sitting in an airplane seat, so I usually bring a book along – but I'd finished the book I'd brought with me on that trip.
3. So I stopped at the bookstore there in the airport and browsed the magazines for something interesting.
4. My eye fell on a Health & Fitness magazine with some interesting articles.
 - a. what peaked my curiosity was just that week I'd decided that I'd let my physical condition slip way too far,
 - b. so I determined to get in shape, realizing that I needed to settle on a long term plan to do so.
 - c. so, I bought the magazine, and read it cover to cover on the flight home.
5. I learned so much from it that I decided to subscribe and sent in one of the '30' little subscription cards they'd stuffed into it. Then every month, a new issue came.
6. But only a couple months into my subscription, I got renewal letter.
 - a. here I was 2 or 3 months after first ordering it for a year, and already they were asking me to renew for *another* year.
 - b. it seemed that every month I was getting *yet another* renewal offer.
 - c. then I got a call, asking if I wanted to renew – and if I renewed for 3 years, I could get another magazine for free!
 - d. that sounded like a good deal so I renewed.
7. Well, that was like opening a door to a whole plethora of subscription services.
8. My name and phone number must have appeared on some master call list with the word "Sucker" over it because more and more calls started coming and more letters offering renewals – but I was already renewed for some 3½ years!!!!

B. Renewing Our Subscription

1. My message tonight/today is a call to *renew* your subscription – not to a magazine, but to something *far more important*.
2. As important as *physical* health and fitness are – our *spiritual* health ought to be a far *higher priority*.
3. So, I want to encourage you to renew your *spiritual* subscription to God.
 - a. to make a conscious recommitment of yourself into His care.
 - b. really, *every day* we need to renew our sense of *dependence* on the Lord.
4. In February of this year, I taught on the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6.
5. Though that was only 9 months ago, I want to revisit it today because that lesson is one we need to be *continually reminded* of.
6. We need to be reminded of it because it's something this world conspires to make us *forget* – that we are, in fact, dependent on God for everything.
7. The key to living successfully, is to *embrace* that dependence;
 - a. not to run from it – nor to try and assert our independence *from* God.
 - b. but to *realize, embrace*, and even learn to *revel* in our utter dependence on Him.

C. That's What Prayer Does

1. And that's what prayer does – or I should say, that's what prayer *ought* to do.
2. Prayer, when offered up in the manner God intends it, is a renewal of our sense of dependence on Him.
3. Prayer is a way for us to fulfill the purpose for which we were created – to fellowship with Him!
4. Prayer is not so much getting *stuff from* God, as it is about *getting Him* and *giving ourselves to*

Him!

5. And the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 reveals this.

II. TEXT

A. V. 9 - *Pray Like This!*

⁹In this manner, therefore, pray:

1. In the verses prior to this, Jesus had told His followers how NOT to pray.
 - a. he told them not to pray as the *hypocrites* do
 - 1) the hypocrites are those who don't see prayer as a way to *renew* their dependence on God
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 - 2) so much as a way to affirm and prove themselves as those who don't really NEED Him.
 - 3) the prayers of the hypocrite aren't really aimed at God at all;
 - 4) they're aimed at other people, trying to *impress* them with how good and righteous they are.
 - b. then Jesus had told His followers not to pray as the *heathen* do.
 - 1) they think they will be heard for their many words.
 - 2) the unbeliever sees prayer as a kind of mystical call to the spiritual paramedics.
 - 3) they only call when they're in trouble, and then only to get them *out of trouble* and to renew, *not their dependence* on God, but their independence *from* Him.
2. Jesus said, "Don't be like the hypocrites or the heathen. When YOU pray, pray in this way . . ."
3. Now, note that Jesus didn't say, "Pray *this* prayer; memorize and offer up *these words* as a rote formula."
 - a. that's the very kind of praying He's *correcting*.
 - b. He said, "Pray in this *manner* – pray *like* this."
4. We need to see this as a model of the *attitude* we need in prayer rather than some kind of *formula* for prayer.

⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. [May Your name be honored as holy!]

5. This is *worship* – the kind of worship that blesses the heart of God because it's an expression of both *intimate familiarity* and *reverent honor*.
 - a. He is to be honored as **HOLY!** But this Holy One is nothing less than a **FATHER** to us – He is **OUR** Father.
 - b. a prince or princess who's father is the king of a nation enjoys a unique relationship of intimacy with him because he *is* his/her father.
 - c. but at the same time, the son & daughter realize the special role their father plays as the king and are careful to show due respect to him.
 - d. faith in Christ has resulted in our being *made the children of God* –
 - e. since He is King of Creation, then we are royalty who enjoy a special place of favor in coming to Him as our Heavenly Father.
6. Our prayer needs to *begin* with a turning of our eyes onto the God Who has not only created us, but Who has adopted us and made us His own beloved children.
 - a. we need to begin here, with worship, because it *centers* us;
 - b. it reminds us of what's true and steadfast.
 - c. all too often we rush into prayer pre-occupied with our concerns and cares.
 - d. we can't see God for the abundance of our burdens; He's eclipsed by our troubles.
 - e. the Sun is a massive sphere of bright, burning gas.
 - 1) it's so huge, you could place hundreds of Earths inside it with plenty of room left over.
 - 2) Its heat and energy is the furnace that fires most of Earth's systems
 - f. and yet, as massive as the Sun is, I can blot it out of my vision simply by sticking my puny little thumb in front of my eye!
7. Our problems, needs, and troubles are close to us and they can easily eclipse the greatness and

- grandeur of God.
8. By starting with worship, we put things in the right perspective.
 - a. God is Our Father – He cares about us.
 - b. He’s in heaven, high above and far bigger than any trouble.
 - c. and He’s Holy – all-wise and all-powerful and compared to Him, our needs are as nothing!
 - d. every so often, my 12 year old daughter will want to open a jar and the lid’s on too tight.
 - e. now, she can stand there and work and work on it, or she can bring it to me and let me open it for her.
 - f. how silly it would be if she spent hours trying to take the lid off when I’m in the next room and all she has to do is call me or bring it to me.
 - g. Karesse would never spend more than 10 seconds on a stuck lid.
 - h. no, she would immediately get up and bring it to me and ask me to help her because as my daughter, she abides in a state of continual dependence on me and honors my superior strength, in opening jars!
 9. Jesus calls us to begin our prayer with worship because it puts everything in the right place in our hearts and minds;
 - a. God, our Father is on His heavenly throne
 - b. and we are on Earth where the power of God can do *anything!*

B. V. 10 - Intercession

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

1. This is *intercession*.
 - a. intercession means to *intervene* on behalf of another, to bring them and their needs to the One who can help.
 - b. what Jesus means here is that we’re to make the center and focus of our lives Who God is and what He’s doing.
 - c. when we pray, we’re not aimed at making *our will done in heaven* – we’re concerned with discovering God’s will, and then being agents of that will on Earth.
 - d. friend, never go into prayer with the idea that you’re there to *change God’s mind* or convince Him to do something He’s not inclined to do.
 - e. prayer is not divine arm-twisting.
 - f. prayer is open fellowship with God that comes with a heart *yielded to* and *dependent on* Him.
 - g. faith tells us God is All-wise, All-powerful, All-loving & Perfect!
 - h. if He’s perfect – can He change? No!
2. What we want to do in prayer is to be bent *to* Him – discovering what *His* will is,
3. Then being the agents through which that will is manifest on earth.

C. V. 11 - Petition

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

1. This is *petition* – asking *personal* requests of God.
2. Intercession is praying for others, that the will and rule of God would be accomplished in their lives and circumstances,
3. Petition is praying for our own needs.
4. Even though God knows our needs before we ask, and has already promised to meet them, it’s still a good thing for us to stop and think about our needs and then offer them up to the Lord!
 - a. it’s not that God needs to be reminded – it’s good *for us* to find freedom from the anxiety of having to meet our daily needs.
 - b. my daughter Karesse could worry about whether or not we’re going to have dinner tonight – she doesn’t, but she *could*.
 - c. to relieve her fears, all she has to do is come and say, “Daddy, are we having dinner tonight?” and I will assure her we are. Her fears are *instantly* banished.

- d. when we make request of God for the things we *need*, it isn't because God needs to be reminded.
 - e. *it's for us* – so we can be free of anxiety and worry about what we'll eat, what we will wear, where we'll live.
5. We ought to come to our Heavenly Father as a young child comes to her mom or dad – in complete yet simple dependence.

D. V. 12 – Cleansing

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

1. This is a request for *cleansing*.
2. Every and any relationship is prone to tension because of offenses.
3. Because God is holy and we struggle with sin, there will be times when we offend God.
4. The essence of prayer is *fellowship* with God, but sin hinders fellowship.
5. So we need to ask God to forgive us, to discharge the sins and offences that have piled up and have hindered our fellowship with Him.
6. Now, I know you think Lynn & I enjoy the perfect marriage, but believe it or not, it does occasionally happen, maybe once a decade, that I may say some unkind or thoughtless thing that hurts her.
 - a. if I ignore that hurt and refuse to admit my error, it becomes a wedge that'll hinder our fellowship & intimacy.
 - b. all she wants me to do is to come sincerely to her, admit I was an idiot and ask her to forgive me.
 - c. when I do, she's glad to let it go – but I NEED to confess; she needs to see & hear my sincerity.
 - d. what happens if I ignore it, or pretend I don't know why she's put off with me, or say it's *her* problem, or justify and rationalize myself?
 - e. our communion, our fellowship and intimacy will stop right at that point.
7. If your relationship with God is dry, stagnant, and distant – it may be that you've failed to come honestly before the Lord in confession and repentance of your sin.
8. Another block leading to spiritual dryness and seeming distance from the Lord is *unforgiveness* – as Jesus said, “Forgive us our debts, *as we forgive our debtors.*”
 - a. this was an oft-repeated lesson Jesus taught the disciples –
 - b. that the measure of our *being forgiven* by God is *proportional* to our willingness to let go of and forgive the offenses leveled at us by others
 - c. it's all a matter of *perspective*;
 - 1) we must come to see *our sin* as *monstrous*
 - 2) and the *sins of others* against us as *petty*.

E. V. 13 - Protection

13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

1. This is a request for *protection*.
2. God has already pledged Himself to protect us – He's the Good Shepherd who unwaveringly tends His flock.
3. But as His sheep, we need to keep in mind that protection lies in staying IN & WITH that flock!
4. As with the prayer for our daily bread, this prayer is aimed at reminding us that we live in a fallen world filled with all sorts of dangerous traps.
5. We need to keep our eyes open and our ears peeled for those things that will lead us astray if we aren't careful.
 - a. so really, this is a prayer for *spiritual discernment*.
 - b. and who doesn't need more of that today?
6. The hundred sheep vs. the lost one the shepherd went after. **DANGER!**

F. Epilog

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

1. The prayer ends as it began - with more worship & praise.
2. These are the *bookends* to prayer and fellowship with God.
3. As we enter His presence we fix our spiritual sights on the Lord of Glory,
4. Then we go forth carrying the banner of His praise.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Remember?

1. As we've gone over this today, you may remember much of this from last February.
2. Great if you do – what's important is this: Do you remember it *every day*?
3. Jesus said that *when we pray*, we're to pray like this.
4. So what's the bottom line of this prayer? What's the theme that ties it all together?

B. Dependence

1. *Complete dependence* on God!
2. It's *His* will we want; *His* provision, *His* forgiveness, *His* protection.
3. We start and end in worship & praise because it reminds us that it's right, good, and *safe* to depend on Him.
4. Think for a moment what the underlying appeal of sin is.
5. Consider the *first* sin:
 - a. the devil told Eve she didn't have to answer to God anymore.
 - b. she could be a goddess herself.
 - c. it was an appeal to *independence*.
 - d. in effect, the devil said "Don't listen to God. Do your own thing!"
6. In throwing off their dependence on God and seeking to gain independence, Adam and Eve ended up losing their freedom, their glory, and the dominion that had been given to them.
7. That lust for independence, for answering to no authority higher than themselves, is something that's been passed on by original sin to every one of Adam's children.
 - a. and as long as we live that way – duplicating and ratifying Adam and Eve's bid for independence from God
 - b. we'll never know the dominion, glory, and freedom God intends for us.
8. This message goes contrary to just about *everything* the wisdom of the world counsels us.
 - a. being self-sufficient and a can-do kind of person is something we're told is good to aspire to.
 - b. we equate a good part of maturity with being *independent*.
 - c. many see dependency as being a sign of *weakness*!
9. And really, as it relates to other people, that's mostly true.
 - a. we don't want our 40 year old children living off of us.
 - b. being able to take care of our own affairs is normal and healthy.
 - c. if our sense of happiness is dependent on another person, that's going to create huge problems.
10. But God never intended us to mature into a place where we no longer needed Him.
11. On the contrary, *spiritual* health and maturity are all bound up in our realizing our utter dependence on the Lord.
12. That's right where He wants us, and right where we need to be.

C. This 40 Days

1. What's true for us individually, is also true for us corporately as a church.
2. This new building project we're just now launching into is not something the Lord has patted us on the back and said, "Okay, go get 'em."
3. No – every step of the way, with every decision that's made, and every trial to be overcome, God

wants us to look to Him, to depend **on** HIM.

4. It's God Who'll show us where to go. He'll dig the foundation, and raise the walls and run the wires, and install the pipes.
5. He'll use men and women, but it'll be God who does it.
6. And to be frank, if it isn't God who builds it – I for one don't want anything to do with it.
7. On that day when we have our first service there – I long for every soul who stands there, in that first moment of corporate worship, to look around and say – “Look at what great things the LORD has done!”
8. This first 40 days of prayer that we are in are a time of **initiation** for the building project.
 - a. this is the **real groundbreaking** because we are breaking up the fallow ground of our hearts and asking **the Lord** to do it!
 - b. we're asking Him to show us what part we're to play.
 - c. I know for me and my family, what He's calling us to do means **renewing my dependence** on Him.
9. And THAT'S right where God wants us – because that's where He can use us.