

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6

“14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. 21 But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; 22 whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. 23 Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”

“The Importance of Prayer”

Well, I had planned to cover the Apostle’s final admonition to pray as part of our warfare after the Advent season, but with Paul not feeling well I am here on short notice and will continue it today!

I touched on prayer in my last message, but there is certainly more to say! We spoke about how we are to pray without ceasing and just what that means. [maybe example of Nehemiah]

And so Paul gives us a very practical example of how we are to pray one for another...

6:18 **“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”** [*praying for the one and the many?*]

Paul left another example of such prayers for us back in chapter one: As a reminder & example of how we are to pray for each other.

“15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”

Here at Church of the King we encourage you to pray one for another with suggested names on the Church calendar. If you wonder just how you should pray for them, these prayers from the Apostle are great examples! We find another such prayer in chapter 3: **“14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”**

Any of us can become prayer warriors by following these examples left for us by the Apostle Paul or Nehemiah?

- As we strive to do that, we learn that a good prayer life begins with good theology and good habits!

Habits can be as simple as remembering to say grace before each meal and having a regular time where you enter your prayer closet. We also have prayers of confession and a corporate prayer each week here in worship as well as those said over the sermon and communion. So, regular attendance at worship not only teaches us about such prayers, providing good examples, but reminds us about the importance of prayer week after week.

- We also pray the Lord's prayer each week and that touches on the theology of our prayers.

When the Disciples asked Jesus how to pray, He gave them this prayer! Our young children can pray this prayer, while a seasoned minister can expound on it with an entire series of sermons!

The final portion of the Heidelberg Catechism spends a good deal of time going through the Lord's prayer rightly presenting it as a series of six petitions that we bring before our Father in heaven.

We studied this prayer in our journey through Luke, but it is worth reviewing because a right understanding of The Lord's Prayer can inform all of the prayers we should be lifting up day after day.

- Studying this portion of The Heidelberg catechism also reminds us about the wisdom we have from our Reformation heritage which we should not neglect!

The suggested texts will send you on a long journey through the Scriptures.

Question 120 *Why hath Christ commanded us to address God thus: "Our Father"?*

Answer . That immediately, in the very beginning of our prayer, he might excite in us a childlike reverence for, and confidence in God, which are the foundation of our prayer: namely, that God is become our Father in Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of him in true faith, than our parents will refuse us earthly things.

- We address God as Father, reminding us of our adoption – That we ARE righteous in Christ!
- Thus we approach God with a child-like faith, whether thanking Him for a meal or praying for a lost friend.

Question 121 *Why is it here added, "Who art in heaven"?*

Answer . Lest we should form any earthly conceptions of God's heavenly majesty, and that we may expect from his almighty power all things necessary for soul and body.

- God and only God should be our focus as we bring our requests before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

The Heidelberg then outlines the petitions which Jesus instructs us to bring before God in prayer:

- We should come to understand that ALL of our needs and requests and praise we might lift up are encompassed in these six simple petitions!

Question 122 *Which is the first petition?*

Answer . "Hallowed be thy name"; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know thee, and to sanctify, glorify and praise thee, in all thy works, in which thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored & praised on our account.

➤ We should remember that this is a petition: It is NOT our job to have His name be hallowed in heaven, or on earth...

➤ Our prayer is that God's name would be hallowed here in our lives!

Question 123 . Which is the second petition?

Answer . "Thy kingdom come"; that is, rule us so by thy word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee; preserve and increase thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against thy holy word; till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all.

➤ Very helpful instruction from the catechism and it should make us always be asking...

“Do we believe we are praying to the God of Heaven Who is the Creator of all things and Who controls all of history?”

Question 124 Which is the third petition?

Answer . "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"; that is, grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, and without murmuring obey thy will, which is only good; that so every one may attend to, and perform the duties of his station and calling, as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven.

➤ Down-home Christianity – Believing the Great Commission and learning the importance of those instructions the Apostle gave to men & women, husband & wives, children and parents as well as servants and masters!

Question 125 Which is the fourth petition?

Answer . "Give us this day our daily bread"; that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry, nor even thy gifts, can profit us without thy blessing; and therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it alone in thee.

➤ Our focus is day to day which is why we pray without ceasing in order to be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, letting our requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts & minds through Christ Jesus.!

Question 126 What is the fifth petition?

Answer . "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; that is, be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us poor sinners, our transgressions, nor that depravity, which always cleaves to us; even as we feel this evidence of thy grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor.

➤ God is working with broken tools –Keep short accounts: As James reminded us, we are to be humble & not “teachers of morals.”

➤ Matthew 6 gives us a sobering commentary from Jesus after He shared this prayer: “14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

-- Pray that God make us a forgiving people like our forgiving Father!

Question 127 Which is the sixth petition?

Answer . "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"; that is, since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do thou therefore preserve and strength us by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory.

➤ **Remembering our frailty – Why we should always be praying for the armor of Ephesians Chapter Six we just studied, including prayer as we join with the disciples in asking Jesus to teach us to pray!**

Question 128 How dost thou conclude thy prayer?

Answer . "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"; that is, all these we ask of thee, because thou, being our King and almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but thy holy name, may be glorified for ever.

➤ **The Lord's Prayer opens and closes with the focus on God!**

➤ **We must come to see the Lord's Prayer NOT as a vain repetition, but rather as the door through which we can pray the entire Psalter back to God!**

Question 129 What doth the word "Amen" signify?

Answer . "Amen" signifies, it shall truly and certainly be: for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him.

➤ **Very appropriate that Amen is the subject of the last question in our catechism!**

"Amen" is used 72 times in Scripture: With 50 of them in the New Testament

➤ **God identifies Himself with this word Amen:**

Isaiah 65:16 "So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth [or literally God of Amen]; and he who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of Amen!"

Rev. 3:14: "These things says the Amen, the Faithful & True witness"

➤ **Amen is used as a covenant oath: Far stronger than a simple "Yes, I agree with that."**

Duet. 27: "And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen!' [verse after verse]

After Nehemiah charges the people 5:13: "And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the Lord."

➤ **We should use Amen to bless God as a privilege of a justified people: A taste of eternity!**

Romans 1:25 "the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen"

Romans 9:5 "Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen"

➤ **The whole congregation is involved in the worship of God, and the amen is one place where this involvement is most visible**

Deut. 27:15 "And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord"

I Chronicles 16:36 "And all the assembly said, Amen and praised the Lord"

Neh. 5:13 "Then all the people answered, Amen, Amen"

There are many ways that we can properly use AMEN during our covenant renewal worship:

➤ **When the Elders call for an AMEN after a Scripture reading or absolution! We should respond with a hearty AMEN!**

- **When we sing glory to God in a psalm or hymn we should conclude with a hearty AMEN!**
- **When we receive God's blessing in the benediction**

Can we learn to do it right?

- **We have a challenging goal from the example of the early church:**

“Jerome commented that in the early church, when visitors used to come, they were commonly frightened at the amen – it had the sound of thunder, said by the people who understood it”

They were practicing, as should we, what we see commanded in Psalm 106:48 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: And let all the people say, Amen praise the Lord!”

As we go forward, may we do so as a praying people who have not only the habit of prayer but the proper theology and understanding of prayer!

With that, can I get a hearty AMEN?

Communion Meditation:

II Samuel 7:24 "26 So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, 'The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel.' And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. 27 For You, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You. 28 And now, O Lord God, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant. 29 Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You; for You, O Lord God, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.'"