

# What Happens When We Forget to Seek First the Rule of God Over Our Life Each Day? Matthew 6:9-13

God is amazingly consistent in His desire for all of our heart and all our soul.

Look at His words starting in Deuteronomy. He told Israel under Moses that His standard was that they would seek Him and find Him only when they sought for Him with ALL their heart.

## GOD WANTS ALL OUR HEARTS

Deuteronomy 4:29 (NKJV) But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find *Him* **if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.**

Then God picked a man after His own heart who confessed as a teenager (Ps. 19:14) that he (David) wanted everything he thought and did to please the Lord.

Psalms 19:14 (NKJV) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart **Be acceptable in Your sight**, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

Then the rest of the next 500 years of history about Israel was tied to whether or not they sought God with all their hearts.

1 Kings 8:48 (NKJV) and when **they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul** in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name:

2 Kings 23:3 (NKJV) Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, **with all his heart and all his soul**, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.

Then at the end of their freedom, as they were being besieged and carried away into captivity, occupation, persecution, wanderings, and homelessness for the next 2,600 years God told them again:

Jeremiah 29:12-14 (NKJV) Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup> And you will seek Me and find *Me*, **when you search for Me with all your heart.** <sup>14</sup> I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

## JESUS CAME TO REAFFIRM GOD'S DESIRE TO HAVE ALL OUR HEARTS

As we open to Matthew 6 we are looking at the actual words that Jesus taught clearly to His disciples. Those words He commanded in Matthew 6, were heard on that

day, remembered by those who heard and believed in Christ; and were later written down by Matthew as the Spirit of God inspired him. The take away is that Jesus Christ the Lord spoke those commanded words very clearly.

Now, fast-forward three years, to Matthew 28. Jesus is doing the final lesson for His disciples and He tells them to go everywhere, share His Gospel: and for everyone who would respond, teach them everything He commanded. Among those truths that were to be taught were these simple, commands about the daily need for following this pattern in prayer. The take away is that what Jesus commanded was very clearly taught to the church.

Last week we looked at the second petition: Thy Kingdom Come. That is not only a prayer for God's rule over the Earth, it is also a clear call for all of us believers to renew our surrender of every part of our life each day. Just as a reminder, let's go over the list of what Christ's call to seek first His rule in our lives, would look like in His teachings, and those that followed from His disciples.

## CHRIST'S CONSISTENT CALL FOR ALL OUR HEART

First, we can summarize Christ's call to His disciples with a string of phrases He used in:

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV) But **seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 10:37-39 (NKJV) He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 **And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.** 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Luke 9:23-25 (NKJV) Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.** <sup>24</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? (see also Matthew 16:24-27; Mark 8:34)

Luke 14:26-27, 33 (NKJV) "If anyone **comes to Me** and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot **be My disciple.** <sup>27</sup> And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot **be My disciple.** <sup>33</sup> **So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.**

John 12:25-26 (NKJV) **He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him *My* Father will honor.

God is amazingly consistent in His desire for all of our heart. So in the Lord's Prayer, asking for God's Kingdom in my life means that I want God's control over my life. I am saying to my Father in Heaven: Control Me.

# CONTROL ME MEANS

## **Control my Treasures or they get stolen.**

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV) “**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## **Control my Body or my life gets wasted.**

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God**, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## **Control My Motives Or My Ways Won't Glorify God.**

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> **For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.**

## **Control My Thoughts Or They Get Driven Like The Waves Of The Sea.**

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV) For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup> casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

## **Control My Days Or They Get Frittered Away.**

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) **I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

## **Control My Emotions Or They Become Fleshly.**

Galatians 5:22-26 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

## **Control My Time Or It Gets Squandered.**

Ephesians 5:16 (NKJV) **redeeming the time**, because the days are evil.

## **Control My Mind Or It Becomes Contaminated.**

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV) Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—**meditate on these things.**

## **Control my Tongue or my speech gets corrupted.**

Colossians 4:6 (NKJV) **Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt**, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

So that is Christ's desire, He calls to us to”

## THE FOUR STAGES OF CHRIST'S MESSAGE

This morning think of Jesus Christ, God the Son, explaining what is best for any of us who will listen to Him, believing that He is who He claimed to be. As God the Son, Jesus revealed the way to God as Father so simply and clearly.

Have you ever drawn the lines connecting what Jesus said as He taught, with the Great Commission, through the Epistles, and to the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tour of His Churches that is recorded in Revelation? Think of Christ Jesus this morning in those four connected pictures:

First, think of **Christ's ministry** where we hear Him teaching Matthew 6:9-13.

Then think of the **Great Commissioning** at the end of His ministry as He stands and sends out His disciples to teach what he taught to each new believer in Matthew 28:19-20.

Then think of **Christ's Apostles** as they went everywhere evangelizing and planting churches.

Finally, think of **Jesus coming back to visit His Church**, and examining how the believers were doing in each church. That is a summary of Revelation 2-3.

## BEWARE OF DRIFTING AWAY FROM SEEKING GOD FIRST

If Jesus is not controlling us, we drift. What happens to believers who drift away from regular renewals of those vows of consecration?

At the end of an incredible life, John the Apostle wrote some arresting words. He had met and followed Jesus as a very young man. After those climactic days of the Crucifixion, resurrection and birth of the church, John had outlived them all. As the final Apostle he closes his message with this warning:

In First John, the last words of John to believers are a warning against idols. The Spirit of God moved John to write a stern warning at the end of the Apostolic Age to the vibrant New Testament Church that they needed to be very careful to guard against idols.

### **Beware Of Anything Becoming An Idol.**

1 John 5:21" Dear children, keep [aorist middle imperative] **yourselves from idols.**" (NIV)

What are some modern day idols? Look at some old ones the Lord condemns and we can see the new.

### **Beware Of The Idol Of Money:**

Job 31:24-28 "If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,' if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high." (NIV)

### **Beware Of The Idol Of Career Or Technology:**

Habakkuk 1:15-16 "The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food." (NIV)

### **Beware Of The Idol Of Appetites Or Desires:**

Philippians 3:19 "Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." (NIV)

### **Beware Of The Idol Of Distractions Or Empty Living:**

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

## WHEN CHRIST EXAMINED SOME EARLY BELIEVERS' LIVES

Now, what is the track record for those who heard Christ's call? We can look at the detailed analysis that Jesus did after the sixtieth anniversary of the birth of His church. Sixty years after Pentecost Jesus came back and reported on His on site inspections at His local churches. He picked seven churches that basically represented all churches then, and throughout the years since.

Those churches were measured against what Jesus had taught about His expectations. Those churches were measured against what God's Word records as the doctrines the Apostles taught in the local churches as recorded in the Epistles.

What did Jesus find? Turn with me to Christ's last words to us in His Church. Revelation 2-3 has the medical examination radiology report. After the X-Ray was taken, Jesus sends a detailed examination analysis. We can read it today.

Revelation 2:1-4 (NKJV) "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup> and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. <sup>4</sup> **Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.**

## JESUS STATES HIS DESIRE

In one word Jesus has already described what He wanted, way back in Mt. 6:33.

Jesus wants first place, and either He has that right now in your life, or He doesn't. There is no runner-up or tied. First place is a chosen way of life.

The word in verse 4 translated into English as "first" is the Greek word *protos* which is a contracted superlative from the Greek preposition *pros* which has the meaning 'in front of, above, before'.

So this word that God's Spirit chooses to record in Christ's message is a word that means that something is to always be "foremost". Thus we can read foremost into the words of the dictionary definition of this word:

**Foremost** in time; **Foremost** in place; **Foremost** in order of importance, and is before others things; **Foremost is being** at the beginning of any list;

**Foremost is being** the best and most important;

**Foremost is being** simply first of all.

What had Jesus already asked for them to do, and taught them through Paul, Timothy and John's ministry of the Word to them?

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV) "But **seek first the kingdom of God** and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Matthew 22:37 (NKJV) "Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God **with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**"

## JESUS STATES THEIR PROBLEM

Their lives were clogged with so many other things, so Jesus was no longer first in their hearts, in their schedules or their concentration, and all that signaled that He was no longer the supreme ruler of their lives. They were not being obedient to the clear commands Christ had already given them, thus they were not pleasing Him.

Jesus said: stop everything else from pushing me out, Go back to your original settings and Love the Lord Your God with all you are. First love means loving Christ so much that you are willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to have Christ foremost in your life.

## FOUR DIAGNOSTICS TO REVEAL IF GOD IS FOREMOST

This morning we each need to do a self-checkup of our spiritual health and fruitfulness. Remember, the healthier we are the more fruit God can produce through our lives. Here are some diagnostic questions:

### WORSHIP DIAGNOSTIC:

Do you plan your schedule around the gathering of the Body of Christ? Or do you fit it in when possible? The answer to that question reveals whether you are seeking first what God wants, or

what you want.

Do you feel excited to be here at church and close to the Lord, with a heart tuned and already filled with Spirit-prompted worship, or are you distant these days from all that, and you even feel kind of far away from God this morning?

#### FELLOWSHIP DIAGNOSTIC:

Do you love to meet with other believers and share what God is doing in each other's lives, or can you hardly remember the last time your life was fruitful? Do you feel far from joy and peace, victory and blessing? In fact, do you secretly hope that no one gets too close this morning and asks you personal questions while you are here?

#### DEVOTIONAL DIAGNOSTIC:

Can you hardly wait to get started in our study of God's Word this morning, and feel the same way each day of the week in your personal devotions, or does your Bible feel as heavy as lead when you pick it up?

#### MINISTRY DIAGNOSTIC:

Are you a conscious investor in ministry, looking for more ways to use your time and spiritual gifts to serve the Lord, or do challenges for you to jump in to serve and speak up for Christ bother you a bit, and even push you away? Do you sometimes wonder if you'll get any reward in Heaven, and just hope that you'll get there? Has the zeal you once knew dried up, and become a far off memory?

## DOES GOD HAVE ALL OF YOU UNDER HIS CONTROL?

This morning think of Jesus Christ, God the Son, explaining what is best for any of us who will listen to Him, believing that He is who He claimed to be. As God the Son, Jesus revealed the way to God as Father so simply and clearly.

In faith we come to God through Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord. God then becomes our Father. We are then to start a life-long focus upon who He is as the Creator, Sustainer, Owner, and Almighty

God is amazingly consistent in His desire for all of our heart and all our soul.

# APPENDIX: THE AMAZING PARALLELS BETWEEN THE LORD’S PRAYER & THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Christ's Teaching	Lord's Prayer	Seven Churches	Ephesus
(Saved) Understanding Salvation: Jesus came to save (Mt. 1:21). So, knowing what salvation is, assured that the work of grace has begun, and knowing how to share that faith is foundational.	God, focus me on who You are; I NEED You to help me focus;	Ephesus, the careless church, left their first love. Christ said to them and us, “Come back to Me!” To Love Jesus Most; Ephesus (2:1–7): Remember that Jesus is jealous of your love, so lay hold of your first love for Christ.	Spiritual Neutrality: v. 15 “I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Spiritual Neutrality is when we stop aggressively resisting the world. Living the Christian life is resisting the pressure of the world. The world is everything that is not focused upon glorifying God. Anything that is not glorifying Him is pushing us away from His Glory.
(Word-Fed) Seeking Nourishment from the Scriptures: Some of Christ's first words are about the “daily bread” we need from God's Word (Mt. 4:4); and because all our minds are being fed something, we all should be asked: “What is feeding yours?”	As I see You, control me each day. I NEED You to bring me under Your control;	Smyrna, the crowned church, suffered persecution. Christ said to them and us, “Be faithful to the end!” Smyrnan Christians purified by persecution, faithful at all costs to the Lord. Smyrna (2:8–11): Hope in Jesus through life until the end and trust Christ through your suffering.	Spiritual Self-Sufficiency: v. 17a Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—Spiritual Self-Sufficiency is when we think we are making it on our own, and don’t need the Lord’s power, guidance, and presence. We stop “seeking first” the Kingdom of God in our lives and thus began to slowly drift from His righteousness in our lives.
(Spirit-Filled) Seeking Spirit-Filled Living: When Jesus described salvation it included an overflowing river of the Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39); because we can only be useful to God when we allow Him to overflow our lives.	I seek You to lead me through all the myriads of choices life presents each day. I NEED Your leadership;	Pergamos, the compromising church, tolerated evil. Christ said to them and us, “Separate yourselves!” To Separate from Sin Pergamos (2:12–17): Rest in the security that comes from clinging only to Jesus; and conform to Christ, not the world.	Spiritual Insensitivity: v. 17b and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— Spiritual Insensitivity is when we lose our spiritual sight, and no longer see ourselves as God’s Word explains we are.
(Consecrated) Cultivating Spirit-Surrendered & Consecrated Living: Paul capped his monumental doctrinal letter with a plea for regular, ongoing choices of surrender (Rom. 12:1-2): because we must keep presenting our bodies and seeking the renewing of our minds.	Then I will trust that You will supply me with whatever I need to accomplish Your will. I NEED what only YOU can supply;	Thyatira, the corrupted church, joined the world. Christ said to them and us, “Un-Friend the world!” To Un-Friend Worldliness; Thyatira (2:18–29): Fear the chastening love of Jesus so He will not have to discipline sin in the church.	Spiritual Wastefulness: v. 18a I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; Spiritual Wastefulness is when we abandon Christ as our investment counselor and start investing our time and money in “get rich quick for earth” schemes, and stop investing in Heaven.
(Connected) Living in Connection to God: Christ's teaching on the necessity and His example of personal prayer habits is a strong reminder (Mt. 6:9-13). Our prayer life always reflects how much we need, trust, and love our Lord.	Cleanse me so I stay in close touch with You and Your plan. I NEED Your cleansing;	Sardis, the feeble church, wasn’t on guard. Christ said to them and us, “Wake up before it is too late!” To Overflow with His Spirit (Sardis, Rev. 3:1-6);	Spiritual Neglect: v. 18b and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; Spiritual Neglect is when we drop out of God’s work force, and begin to not get dressed for work any more. Jesus often told us to dress ourselves with His character, His power, and His armor.
(Invested) Understanding Life as a Stewardship: Christ's parables so often pointed at an accounting, or stewardship of our lives (Mt. 25:21,23). We all need to soberly remember that we are each given a lifetime that can be invested or not invested, for the Lord.	Protect me from everything that seeks to keep me from You. I NEED Your protection;	Philadelphia, the faithful church, was pleasing to God. Christ said to them and us, “Keep on keeping on!” Philadelphian Christians, sound in doctrine, zealous in ministry, outreaching the world and deeply in love with the Lord Jesus Christ!	Spiritual Blindness: v. 18c and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. Spiritual Blindness is just that: blindness to things of God. We no longer see Him in His Word. We stop noticing His Hand in our lives, and don’t reach up and grasp that Hand extended to us, to hold onto, and follow Him through life. We begin to stumble along, acting more and more like lost people who do not know, cannot see, and do not follow the Lord.
(Watchful) Expecting Spiritual Warfare: Jesus went right from Baptism to the Wilderness of Temptation (Mt. 3:16-4:10); and so do most believers. The only difference is that He was prepared. Jesus told us the way to survive is to “watch & pray” (Mt. 25:13; 26:41). We must learn to resist Satan’s neutralizing attempts at our desires to be: Serving in Christ's Church, Soul-winning as a lifestyle, maintaining Simplicity prompted usefulness & and experiencing the power of Scriptural Meditation.	Empty me so You get all the glory and honor for my life. I NEED You to empty me so I can be filled with You!	Laodicea, the foolish church, needed nothing. Christ said to them and us, “Watch out, you’re making me sick; and I will vomit you out of my mouth unless you repent and see that you need Me!” To Live Crucified (Laodicea, Rev. 3:14-22).	Spiritual Laxity: v. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Spiritual Laxity is when we drop our guard about un-confessed sins in our lives. We forget how horrible sin always is to Jesus. Our sin cost Christ His very life, His intimate fellowship with the Father, and made Him feel the wrath of God in our place. Get rid of sin, don’t sweep it under the rug.