

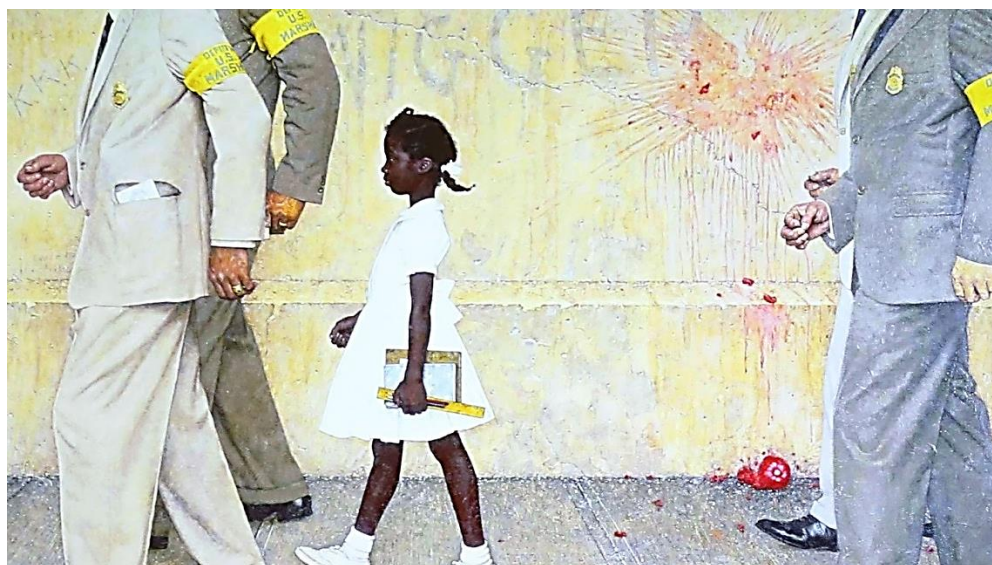
When People Pray: Week 7, Finishing the Lord's Prayer – Forgiveness & Spiritual Warfare

Psalm 32: 1-5; Matt. 6:9-13; Ephesians 6:10-18

**Note this is not a word-for-word manuscript of the message video, but an outline summarizing the main content of the message.*

THE STORY OF RUBY BRIDGES

- Are you familiar with the name “Ruby Bridges”? You might not remember the name, if you saw a photograph or a painting of this little girl, you would probably remember this famous story from America’s recent history.
 - Ruby was the first African-American child to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in Louisiana during the New Orleans school desegregation crisis of 1960.
 - Every child was pulled out of the school by their parents, and each day, Ruby, just six years old, would be escorted by up to 25 federal marshals through an angry mob of protestors—adults screaming death threats, holding up black dolls in a coffin—to an empty school, where she would study each day.
 - A child psychologist, viewing the tragedy of this situation, volunteered to meet with Ruby in her home once a week to offer her emotional support through this crisis.
- He recounts a powerful conversation with her: he noticed that while walking through the crowd into the school one day, she looked like she was talking to them. Was she finally getting angry? Finally telling them to stop? Ruby said no, she was not talking to them. She was talking to God. She was praying for the people. The psychologist asked *why* she was praying for them and *what* she prayed. Ruby, amazingly, replied that she prayed that God would forgive these people, because they were doing bad things, but they didn’t really know what they were doing.
- *The story depicted in this painting summarizes all the themes we’re going to cover as we finish studying the Lord’s prayer today. (Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Spiritual Warfare)* This is a famous painting by Norman Rockwell, “The Problem we all Live With”



THE LORD'S PRAYER

- Today, we conclude our seven week series on prayer. If you remember, in all the different aspects of prayer we’ve been exploring, we have actually been breaking down different parts of the Lord’s Prayer. Let’s remember each part again:
 - *Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name* (ADORATION)
 - *Thy kingdom come* (INTERCESSION)

- *Thy will be done* (UNANSWERED PRAYER)
- *On earth as it is in heaven* (CONTEMPLATION)
- *Give us this day our daily bread* (PETITION, LISTENING)
- ...We've covered ALL THAT so far, but think about what comes next...how does the prayer end?
 - ***And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us*** (CONFESSION & RECONCILIATION)
 - ***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*** (SPIRITUAL WARFARE)
 - ***For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*** (ADORATION – DOXOLOGY, PRAISE)
- **FORGIVENESS**
 - “Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.” This last section is the hardest part of the Lord’s Prayer.
 - We asked Jesus to teach us how to pray, and so far it’s going pretty smoothly. We’re praying to our Father, hallowing His name, seeking His Kingdom, asking for our daily needs—this is great stuff! But here, at the end, Jesus puts words in our mouths! “Forgive us our sins...”
 - *In a way, He forces us to confront the reality of our sin and our need for forgiveness.* We need God’s mercy, we need to be reconciled to God.
 - *And then, going further, Jesus ASSUMES that the people who pray this prayer will be people who forgive the sins and the wrongs of others.*
 - This is about prayer in action, a faith that is lived out in our everyday lives as we breath in God’s forgiveness and breath out mercy to the world around us.
 - This part of the prayer brings us to the heart of the Gospel: forgiveness, reconciliation.
 - While this is a HARD thing to pray, and a hard thing to do, Jesus is really just inviting us in to FREEDOM. Every time we pray this prayer, we’re called *into freedom*—freedom from guilt & shame in our relationship with God (Confession, Forgiveness), and freedom from bitterness & unforgiveness with others (Reconciliation).
 - If the heart of the Gospel is *forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing*, then the most powerful demonstration of this Gospel is people *forgiving* others who wrong them—literally reflecting Christ’s love into the world.
 - Jesus said blessed are the merciful, blessed are the peace makers. Paul said we are ministers of reconciliation.
 - Think about Ruby Bridges—6 years old, and her family had taught her already to live a life of prayer. In a bitter crisis of hatred, she prayed just like Jesus: Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.
- **EVIL**
 - But Ruby’s situation—what this precious, innocent little girl was wrapped up in—is also an instance of the final topic of the Lord’s prayer: in those screaming, hateful mobs of people, we see the presence of evil in our world.
 - Even more, in Ruby’s reaction to the systemic evils of racism and ignorance, in her opposition to this evil with Love and Prayer and Forgiveness—we see the reality of spiritual warfare.
 - ***We’re watching a little girl Fight the Good Fight.***
 - Jesus ends the Lord’s prayer with this somewhat ominous conclusion: deliver us from *evil*. (Later church would add on the ending “For thine is the Kingdom, and the power...”)
 - When we talk about Evil, and specifically spiritual evil, it’s a bizarre subject for some people in modern society.
 - Here are some important thoughts to reflect on this challenging subject:
 - Pete Greig writes, **“In the West, we have, for the most part replaced biblical cosmology with humanistic psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Every sin is attributed to a societal or clinical cause. And yet—for all our supposed sophistication—we remain acutely aware of evil at work in our world.”**

- The modern liberal intellectual Andrew Delbanco observed this: **“A gulf has opened up in our culture between the visibility of evil and the intellectual resources for coping with it. We have jettisoned in the West the idea of cosmic evil, or transcendent evil, or supernatural evil. We don’t believe in it. In fact, we don’t like to use the word evil because it implies moral absoluteness and value judgments. So we use medical terms. We talk about dysfunction. We talk about pathology. We don’t use moral terminology. But as the twentieth century has gone on it has gotten harder and harder to say that holocausts and ethnic cleansing and serial killing is just bad psychological and sociological adjustment.”**
- And So Pete Greig, again, reflects: **“...the biblical cosmology of good versus evil makes sense of our broken world. It stands the test of time because it rings true with our universal human experience...Secularism is partly losing credibility because of the way it attempts to deconstruct ancient moral absolutes without offering any satisfactory alternative explanation for the reality of evil in our world. So let’s go back to the ancient texts and see what the Gospels say...”**
- He goes on, **“The Bible is quite clear that we are at war. There is a vicious battle raging all around us between the Kingdom of God and the tyranny of a cruel insurgency.”** So, C.S. Lewis writes, **“There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter claimed by Satan.”**
- To walk this walk of faith, *we need to know that we have an enemy, we need to know that we have authority in Christ alone, and we need to know how to fight in this battle.*
 - There is so much that we could say in delving into this subject, we simply need to acknowledge this, as we pray the concluding lines of the Lord’s Prayer:
 - *Sometimes, prayer looks like warfare. Sometimes prayer is wielding the Word of God against the presence of evil. Sometimes prayer is standing firm to oppose the presence of evil with the opposite Spirit of God’s love and power.*
- Take a moment to reread Paul’s words about spiritual warfare in **Ephesians 6:10-13.**
- **AMEN**
 - And so, the Lord’s prayer ends with *“Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever. Amen.”*
 - The last line of this prayer is actually taken from the prayer of King David 1 Chronicles 29:11.
 - When we pray this, we’re giving it all *back to God*—just as David was doing with the kingdom, and power, and glory God had given to him as the anointed king of Israel.
 - It’s giving back to God any influence, any power, any credibility or success we have attained through his grace.
- And when we say, “Amen,” we’re literally saying, “We agree,” we’re saying, “Let it be!” We’re agreeing together in Jesus’ Name that all of what we’ve just prayed is true and all of this what we want to be done.
- Pete Greig writes at the conclusion of our book, **“We seem to be witnessing one of the greatest mobilizations of prayer the world has ever seen. Thousands upon thousands are gathering in Nigeria, South Africa, China, Brazil, America, Germany, England, and many other nations...Throughout history, whenever God was about to do a new thing, he first mobilized his people to pray, and he is currently doing so on an unprecedented scale. What happens next is anyone’s guess, but this is undoubtedly an exciting and important time to e learning to pray, seeking to draw closer to the Father, listening to him more carefully, obeying him diligently, and beginning to move in greater spiritual authority...One day soon...every knee will bow before the Father, every tongue will hallow his name, and members of every tribe will lay down their crowns declaring together that *The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*”**
 - If you want to be a part of this prayer movement, this new thing God is preparing, will you say, “Amen,” “Let it be,”? Will you join us? Let’s go! Live a life of prayer. Amen.