

Dr. J. R. Beeke

**OUR DAILY BREAD**  
(Lord's Day 50, Question 125)

Psalter 222:3, 5, 9  
Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11  
Psalter 396  
Psalter 400:4-5, 7  
Psalter 297

Dear congregation,

In Matthew 4 we read of Jesus being tempted by the devil. Unlike Adam who was tempted in Paradise when surrounded by trees of delicious fruit, Jesus was tempted when He was hungry, when He didn't have His daily food. Right then, Jesus, who had power to turn the stones to bread, said to Satan, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (v. 4). How clearly Jesus shows us here that the most important thing in our lives is not our daily bread, but spiritual things. And yet, in the Lord's Prayer, even before we ask for forgiveness, we are taught by Jesus to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We want to show you today, congregation, why Jesus puts that petition first but also how broad this petition is intended to be. Our text is Matthew 6:11: "Give us this day our daily bread." We will consider that in conjunction with Lord's Day 50 of our Heidelberg Catechism, Question and Answer 125:

*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.

With God's help, we will consider our theme today:

## **Our Daily Bread**

1. The Petition for God's Provision
2. The Purchase of God's Provision
3. The Fruit of God's Provision

I repeat: Our Daily Bread, or, Our Daily Provision: The Petition for It, the Purchase of It, and the Fruit of It.

It is remarkable, we said, that the petition for daily bread precedes the petition for forgiveness of sins. The Lord would teach us by this that our temporal needs are not insignificant, not unimportant to God. The Lord would teach us to go to Him, boys and girls, teenagers, parents, with every need, to go to Him with all our frailty, with all our cares. "Acknowledge me," He says, "in all thy ways." But also the Lord puts this petition first, we believe, because He remembers that we are dust. He knows our frailty, He knows that we are often anxious with issues and questions of daily necessity. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithall shall we be clothed?" Therefore, to deliver us from this anxiety, to make us more fit to serve Him, and that we may exhibit proper care for our souls as well as for others', He teaches us from the outset, as we consider ours and others' needs, to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

What do we mean by daily bread? Daily bread and drink is an expression that symbolizes all our daily, physical, temporal needs. Bread is a staple food, of course, and bread in Bible times was even more fundamental than it is today. Bread was a synonym of food. If you say "bread," you could also mean "food." And when you said "bread" or "food" you could also be saying, especially in a context like this, "all my daily necessities by which I live in this world, all that is necessary to maintain my daily life" — clothing, shelter, and all other things that we need — a place to live, the strength and health to do our work, and the wisdom to perform our daily tasks.

We may say "Give us this day our daily bread" is a petition that even refers to and includes our natural senses, "Give us eyesight to see, hearing to hear, taste to enjoy Thy gifts, appetite and digestion. Give us light and darkness, cold and warmth, rain and wind and sun" — all the material things we need to continue our natural human existence.

But "Give us this day our daily bread" includes yet more. It includes also the common joys of normal and healthy daily living. It includes family life — the relationship to our husbands or wives and with our children. When we bowed our heads this morning, fathers, and if one of the two prayers you uttered at the family table was the Lord's Prayer, then when you said in the presence of your children, "Give us this day our daily bread," you were praying that they may have minds to receive God's Word in His house; you were praying also that you may have family fellowship today, that there may be a good atmosphere in your family, that there may be food in your home for your family, that there may be a general overall daily happiness. Bread refers to the daily necessities, the basics of daily life for an enjoyable life in the fear of the Lord.

You see, our tables may be filled, we may have food and drink, but if we don't have the other necessities of daily life — if there is disharmony between husband and wife, if there is an argumentative spirit between parents and children, if there is little love and togetherness and unity in the family — then that bread is tasteless. Where there is tension in the home, then daily necessities for normal functioning are not there, for there is a wear and a tear on the whole fabric of family life. So, the entire field of natural blessings, of common-grace blessings, is what Jesus has in mind when He instructs us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," "Give us our daily necessities, all things necessary for the body," says our instructor. Children need not only bread; they need the love of their parents. Husbands need not only bread; they need the love of their

wives. Wives need not only bread; they need the love of their husbands. And so you see how broad is the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread."

When this petition is uttered, like all the other petitions, it is not in the singular tense. Jesus is teaching us throughout this entire Lord's Prayer, even in natural things, to pray corporately, to pray not just for ourself, but to pray for the entire family, to pray for the entire church family, to pray for the entire family of the world, "Give *us* this day *our* daily bread" (emphasis added). You see, we don't just pray for our own table; we pray for every table in our neighborhood, every table in our church, every table in our community, every table in the world. And yet, Paul teaches us that when we pray this in our prayers, as we pray for others, we are praying especially for the household of faith. We must pray for everyone; yes, we pray for our enemies, that they may have their daily bread, but we pray especially for the household of faith. So you see, when we have a heart for other people because we have a heart for God, then we want to include everyone in our prayer.

Paul said, "Do good unto all men" (Gal. 6:10). Thus, furthermore, we must pray even for the cities of "Sodom and Gomorrah" that permeate this nation. Then we will pray even for those living in sin, we will pray for our every neighbor, even for the "Samaritans," that is, those whom we would naturally despise. If we pray this in truth, dear congregation, we will never ask with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?", but we will be concerned for and will pray for all men: "Give us this day our daily bread," especially for God's people, with whom we have a unique kinship. We will pray that the bread of the righteous may be sure, that their daily needs may be met, that God's people may radiate in their daily lives the joy of serving God, that they may bear the image of Christ, and that they may show that they are being made conformable to their Redeemer, Jesus

Christ.

This petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is not only rightly placed in the whole context of the Lord's Prayer, it is not only broad in its scope and also in its application as to whom we pray for, but it is also very specific. "Give us *this day* our daily bread" (emphasis added). Jesus does not ask us here to ask for bread for the coming week or for the coming year. He does not ask us to live years in advance, but He says, as it were, "Pray this way, 'Give us today our daily bread.'" That doesn't mean, of course, that we should be careless about the future. We are not to be Epicureans who say, "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." "This day" does not imply that there should be no concern for the future. Rather, we have to consider the whole of what Scripture says about every topic, and certainly Scripture says things about preparing for the future. Paul says in 1 Timothy 5, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (v. 8). It is lawful, you see, to reserve some funds and some provisions for the future, but (and that is what Jesus would focus on here) we must never lose sight of our dire need for daily blessings, for daily blessings in dependence upon God. When Joseph knew that a famine was coming, what did he do, boys and girls? He built barns and stockpiled the corn, so that when the years of plenty and then famine were over he had some reserve. That was God's will and providence (cf. Gen. 50:20-21). We also read in Proverbs, "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (Prov. 10:5). So Jesus is not saying, "Don't lay anything up for the future," but He is saying, as it were, "Don't be overly anxious for the future (cf. Matt. 6:33-34) and do walk by faith, day by day, realizing that even if you have some reserves, you are still dependent upon Me for blessing. Trust Me daily, that I, the God of thy

yesterdays, will be the God of thy tomorrows as well as the God of thy todays."

"**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," is the basic petition for God's provision, but now we come to our second point: The Purchase of God's Provision. Maybe you wonder, "How is it possible that Jesus taught us to pray 'our' when He also says that all the cattle upon a thousand hills are His? I thought we didn't really possess anything. I thought Jesus possessed everything. Why does He teach us to pray: 'Give us this day *our daily bread*' (emphasis added)?"

That's a good question, isn't it? Why didn't He say, "Give us this day *Thy* daily bread"? I believe there are two answers to this question, congregation. The first is, that when we receive what we worked for in an honest way — through honest work, diligence, faithfulness, and through effort — what we receive in a real way does belong to us. Even those who are unconverted, who receive what they receive, not stamped with God's blessing, but merely as a provision, yet own their provisions; they belong to them if they have worked for it. It does not rightly belong to us if we receive it through what our forefathers called "the bread of idleness" or "the bread of violence." By idleness they meant, of course, through laziness, through living off of the government when you don't need to do so. Or by "through violence" they meant if you obtain something on the black market or you obtain something through stealing. Then, even though you think it's yours, in God's sight it is not yours because you did not receive it rightly, and, therefore, it does not belong to you. You may have it in your house, but you don't have it in God's sight.

Therefore, this petition necessarily says to us that we must work, we must do our daily tasks — we must not simply pray and then shirk our responsibilities. We must work hard. "Give

us this day our daily bread,' that we may enjoy the fruits of our labors in the things that are granted to us." So there is such a thing as a right of property, a right of ownership, a right of possession, and Jesus implies this when He says, "Pray ye: ... Give us this day our daily bread."

Secondly, and more profoundly, this little word "our" refers to Jesus' having purchased all the possessions of His people and then having granted those possessions to them as His children, imparting them to them so that they may become theirs in the favor and under the title of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Paul meant. He was referring to God's people when he said in 1 Corinthians 3, "For all things are your's; ... And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (vv. 21, 23). You see, Jesus didn't only obtain spiritual blessings for His people when He suffered and died for them, but He also earned a divine right to give them, through the right hand of God's favor in Jesus, all their earthly possessions. Calvin said, "Only a child of God can truly enjoy the things of this world, because he looks at all his possessions, and says, 'These things have been purchased for me by the blood of Christ. They have been given to me, because all things I receive in this world come to me as a believer through Christ.'" In Matthew 4 we witness Christ purchasing them, do we not? While He was hungering and while He was tempted — He didn't leave to get food, He didn't first feed Himself and then answer Satan. But while He bore the hunger, while He bore the lack of possessions to earn the right of food for them, He was purchasing those possessions for His people, when He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

So as God's people live uprightly, they may say about everything they have in their homes, everything they look at that belongs to them, "This is a gift from the fountain of all good. This comes down to me from the Father of all lights, through Jesus." Then we see, congregation,

the love of God stamped upon everything we possess, and we see that all our possessions are *purchased* possessions — purchased and obtained for us by the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we understand David's arithmetic, when he says that the little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. Then we can be more content to be converted, having simple food and simple possessions, than to be unsaved, having palaces and millions of dollars, because we see in everything the smile of God, the favor of Jesus, the ownership of Jesus, and that all that He gives us He has purchased, He owns. He entrusts all these gifts to us; we are to be His stewards, to use these things to His glory. Then we understand, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Then, congregation, every bite, if it be seasoned, so to speak, by the blood of Jesus, is sweet. There is no flavorless food when we may see that every slice of bread we receive, children, comes from a fatherly hand through the purchasing power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Our daily bread." Oh, yes, that word "our" can be interpreted, as I said, in a common-grace way to all people. Through God's providence, He provides for all men, but you will not really enjoy your possessions until you learn in that deeper sense, that the word "our" especially applies to God's people, who are His children and heirs through saving grace and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So you see, as long as you remain unconverted, you lack the right to a blessing upon all things — everything that you have, even the things that you have rightly earned, fairly and squarely, everything you possess — because nothing you have is wholly consecrated to God. By nature, we all see that little word "our," as meaning "belonging to me." We interpret that word selfishly, and, so, miss the perspective that everything we have is a blessing from God, and we

forget that all our possessions and all God's gifts and all His exercise of common grace over us will one day testify against us, if we are not brought to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, until you become converted, though you have earned, through honest labor, the physical right to have what you have, you have not the divine right to enjoy in Christ what you have. It is true, unconverted people, that you, too, have some outward, natural enjoyment from your possessions, but that enjoyment cannot compare with the spiritual enjoyment that comes when we are enabled to see that everything flows out of God's fatherly approval and Christ's purchased rights by His blood for us in a way of saving grace.

I vividly remember speaking once to a baker who was a God-fearing man. He said to me, wishing that he could re-live those days, that for the longest time, after he had first opened his shop, that every time a customer would come in, having purchased something and gone out, he would slip into the back of the bakery, and would fall on his knees and thank the Lord Jesus for each sale. He said, "I saw every penny that came into that cash register as having been 'dipped' in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Oh, dear child of God, that's the way to live. Oh, to see that everything you have comes to you through that great King of kings, that great, suffering High Priest, who teaches you to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"! What a difference, congregation, that will then make as to how we view what we and others have! Instead of looking around at other people, saying, "Well, he's well-to-do; he's not so well-to-do," and comparing them, you will then look around and say, "The little that that righteous man has is worth far more than all the riches of any wicked men. What a difference between the portion of the unsaved in this world and the portion of God's people!" May you learn, my friend, whoever you are, even if you have very few possessions —

maybe you are a boy or a girl who has only ten dollars in your piggybank — but may you learn to cry out, "Give us this day our daily bread.' Teach me, Lord; Thou must show me that all things must come to me through the purchased power of the blood of Jesus shall I truly treasure them and surrender them back unto Thee!"

Having considered that the gist of this petition involves the fact that our possessions are a purchased provision, we will see, thirdly, after we sing, what the fruits of this provision may be. Let us sing from Psalter 400, stanzas 4, 5, and 7.

If we understand this fourth petition rightly, and we understand the necessity that all God's provisions be purchased for us by Christ because we are unworthy of the least of them, then we will understand what our instructor says in this answer, that there will be fruit in the soul upon God's provision. And that fruit, congregation, our instructor tells us, is threefold. Listen to his answer: "'Give us this day our daily bread"; that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we [these are the fruits] [1] may thereby acknowledge Thee to be the only fountain of all good, and [2] that neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without Thy blessing; and [3] therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee. So there are three fruits upon this fourth petition prayed rightly.

The first fruit is *humility*. "Grant that we may 'acknowledge Thee to be the only fountain of all good.'" You see, no matter how hard I work, no matter what I do or what I accomplish or how I may be admired in the minds or upon the lips of other people, all my "good" is as nothing, compared with Him who is that "only fountain of all good." If I see who I am, in contrast to that only fountain of all good, then I see that everything I have is from Him, even the mind to do my work, the ability to do my work, the diligence to do my work, and the perseverance to do my work. I see that I have nothing in myself. I cannot move a finger, I cannot blink an eye, I cannot

think a good thought without God's enablement. And that produces humility, congregation. When we pray this prayer rightly, "Give us this day our daily bread," we realize that the overflowing fountain of all good is the Father of lights from above, as James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," (Jas. 1:17). Oh, then each child of God falls prostrate before Him with David, and says, "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house [that Thou dost think upon me, and] that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 Sam. 7:18b). Then we will look around in our homes, we will look around at all our possessions, and we will confess, "Every single one comes from the overflowing fountain of all good. Thou art only good, Lord, and I am only evil, and everything I have is a gift of Thy merciful goodness." So, the first fruit is that I become nothing, and God becomes the overflowing fountain of all good. Therefore, I learn to pray, "*Give us*" — I can't give it to myself, Lord." If God had not created you with the ability to blink, boys and girls, you could not even blink. I once knew a man who couldn't blink. He had multiple sclerosis, which was in an advanced stage; every day his mother lovingly came along and had to take a little instrument and clean out all the matter from his eyes. So much acquired there every day that his eyes were all bloodshot. It was most inconvenient and disabling and, probably, painful and humiliating. He couldn't blink. You can't give yourself anything, children, parents. "Give us this day our daily bread" means that everything comes to us from God, and when we pray it rightly, we realize that. Everything is a gift from God. It produces humility. I think I told you before that I don't think I ever saw my father so humble as after surgery, when the nurse had given him an ice cube on his lips, and as he then meditated that there was not a drop of water for the rich man in hell. "And that's where," he said, "I deserve to be, but this ice

was a gift from the Lord Jesus," purchased by Him. Every drop of water, boys and girls, comes from God. This noon you will go home and you will sit down in front of food and drink, but as you bring that cup to your lips and as you drink, will you stop and think, "This comes from the overflowing fountain of all good"? Did *you* make the milk? You couldn't make a drop. We all are totally dependent upon God. The realization of that brings humility in the lives of God's people.

The second fruit is the fruit of *blessing*, the necessity of experiencing God's blessing in all this goodness He showers upon us. Listen to what our instructor says, "I '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.'" Do you understand what he is saying? He is saying, mothers, you can bring bread to the table this noon, but you cannot bring God's blessing. The bread may be in our hands but the blessing is in God's hands. And so when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we pray not only for the bread but we pray for God to bring His blessing to the bread. There are people sitting here who know periods in their life when they had no appetite. There are other people who have stomach or intestinal problems, so that they are not able to digest food very well. Did you ever thank the Lord for appetite? Did you ever thank the Lord for digestion capabilities? Did you ever thank the Lord for blessing the food so that it does strengthen your body? You see, it strengthens our body every day; but often we take it for granted and we begin to forget who blesses that food, who gives strength. You can bring food to the table, which is God's gift already, but you can't bring the blessing. Everything comes from God. It's only the child of God who understands this in the deepest sense, who understands that not his care nor his diligence can do anything by itself, but that he needs God's blessing. You and I need God's

blessing and we cannot go on without it. It is the child of God who, patterning himself after the heart of Moses, truly prays: "Lord, if Thou go not up with [us], carry us not up hence" (Ex. 33:15). An unconverted man will never pray that in truth. But a child of God says, "Lord, whatever I do, whatever I say, whatever I think, wherever I go, and whatever my future is, I cannot go on without Thy blessing. And if Thou wilt not bless me, then, Lord, cut off my desires, turn me around, and take me the way that Thou wouldst have me to go. Give me this day not just the bread but the blessing upon the bread, that I may be blessed with the right hand of Thy favor, that I may go Thy way." A child of God is not content until he sees Jesus in everything. It is dependent, says our instructor, referring to God, upon "Thy blessing" — not even "Thy gifts," gifts that come out of Thy hand — for if they are without "Thy blessing," then we miss the profit of them.

And finally, thirdly, not only humility and blessing, but also *trusting* is a fruit. Trust is a fruit of praying this petition rightly. "And therefore," concludes our instructor, "that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee." This is the language of a dependent believer. This is the language of one who lives by grace, who eats his bread and drinks his water by the grace of God. This is the language of one who is so dependent that he says, "Lord, I have nothing to say for myself, I have no rights, I have forfeited everything, but I do pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Give me this day a forfeited daily bread. Give me this day that forfeited daily clothing. Give me this day that forfeited home in which I live. Give me this day, this Sabbath day, that forfeited Word which I shall receive. Give me this day a forfeited appetite, a forfeited digestive ability, a forfeited blessing of friendship and family, and grant me a forfeited privilege — trust alone in Thee." This is the language of one who says, "Lord, I have

fallen in Paradise, and all I deserve are the thorns and thistles that Paradise has reaped. I deserve not bread and milk on my table. I deserve thorns and thistles on my table. But oh, God, I trust in Thee for all Thy undeserved gifts, for Thou art God, a merciful God, an overflowing fountain of all good."

My dear friends, when this is our attitude, the attitude of the soul, then there will be blessings. When we are humbled as we receive blessings, when we trust in God, then we may truly pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." But, of course, in our day when we do have so many possessions, when most of us do not have to worry about where our next meal is coming from in a logistical and physical sense of the word, we are so prone to avoid plumbing the depths of this petition. We are so prone to skim over the surface. Oh, we include it in our prayer but we superficially consider it. May I say it this way: It is harder spiritual work to pray this prayer rightly than it is to physically work for the bread that we eat. It is harder spiritual work to realize our dependency upon God, harder work to be stripped of all our own righteousness, to not trust in ourselves or in any other creature, and to trust supremely in God, than it is to actually go out and physically work for our bread and drink. To realize that *our* work can't bring us what we need, or to realize that we can't do it by ourselves and that we're so filled with self-sufficiency, involves us in spiritual warfare, confessing with John, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30). *We* want to go out and do it, *we* want to provide ourselves with our daily bread, and so we go out and work, and we take our paychecks home and buy things and put them on the table, and we eat and digest them, and then we go out and work some more without realizing we have never thereby received a blessing from those things, nor have we ever entered the depths of this petition, "Give

us this day our daily bread," since we have never humbled ourselves. To pray this prayer rightly we need dependency and a trust in God, not in ourselves and not in any other creature. And this is daily work, "Give us this day our daily bread." "Give me today, Lord, a sense of my dependency upon Thee — this day." Why do you think God sends so many daily infirmities into our lives? Why does God make us so weak and so frail so many times? Why does He make us sick? Is it only because of our sins? No, it is not, as Jesus says in John 9:3. It is true that sin, in its broadest sense, is connected with every infirmity, particularly as a result of our fall in Paradise, but God has many other reasons, the primary one of which is for the sake of His glory. I'm convinced, moreover, that one of God's other primary reasons for giving us sickness, weakness, and frailty, is so that every day we may come with our empty hands and we may say, "Give us this day our daily bread," which also, of course, redounds to His honor and glory. You have nothing, my friends, and you are nothing in your own strength. Have you ever thanked the Lord for taking things away from you so that you may realize your total dependence upon Him? That's the blessing God gave to Habakkuk, you remember. He saw only empty barns and a fruitless season. Everything seemed to be hopeless, but he had God's favor in his heart. Then he was satisfied. And there are times, still today, when the world looks upon a child of God, and says, "What use is it to serve the Lord? That child of God doesn't have half enough." But the child of God looks up, and says, "Oh God, why hast Thou given me so much, I who am so undeserving?"

Oh congregation, in God's arithmetic little Gideon with three hundred men is greater than tens of thousands from the world. God is Almighty. The question today is not so much, "*What* do we have?" as it is, "*How* do you have it?" The question today involves discerning what you have and whether you have it in *Jesus*, and does it bear the fruits in your life of humility, of blessing,

and of trust? Are you truly praying, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Amen.

Psalter 297:All stanzas