

An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer

Lord,
Teach Us
to Pray

(Luke 11:1)

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The **Lord's Prayer** is given to us in the Word of God in two passages, Luke 11:2-4, and Matthew 6:9-13, "After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

This exposition of "The Lord's Prayer" was transcribed from a message delivered by Harold Camping, host of the "Open Forum" program, which is broadcast over Family Radio.

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“Our Father”

When Jesus prayed, He addressed God as His Father. Amazingly, God commands us to also address God as “Our Father.” We do not fully understand such condescension on God’s part, but we do know that the Bible speaks of the Father as the giver of every good and perfect gift. We read in James 1:17, “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.”

The greatest gift of all, which is also the focus of the Lord’s Prayer, is the gift of salvation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The Old Testament also has references to God as our Father. For example, Psalm 68:5, “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.”

In the Bible, the fatherless is a reference to the spiritually destitute, the unsaved people. We are of God our Father through creation, but our sins have estranged us from God. Spiritually we are orphans, but God comes to us as a Father to the fatherless. God may be a Father to those who acknowledge their orphaned condition, their spiritual bankruptcy.

The Lord Jesus is spoken of as the everlasting Father in Isaiah 9:6, “For unto us a child

is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

We read in Psalm 103:13, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” God cares for those who love Him.

See also Isaiah 63:16, Isaiah 64:8, Romans 9:21, Romans 8:15-17, John 6:44, Luke 15:18.

“Which art in heaven”

God has revealed many things, but who God is remains a mystery. Mankind by nature wants to have a god whom they can see, the sun, an idol, or a river. Even if they become identified with the Christian religion, they may have all kinds of paraphernalia in their place of worship, because they want to see something tangible that they hope relates to God.

When we become saved, our relationship to God is a relationship of faith. In faith we believe that which we cannot see. We believe with fervency, abandonment, and trust.

Some say, “Well, we can see the Father in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus said in John 14:9, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” It is true that He is the express image of the Father, but that does not tell the whole story. Jesus was on this earth to pay for our sins; He emptied Himself of His glory. He was not seen as the glorious God He re-

ally is, and He prayed to the Father while He was on this earth. He is the Father and yet the Father is a separate person, which is a mystery that our minds cannot comprehend.

If we sincerely pray, “Our Father who art in heaven,” effectively we are saying, “Oh, God, we cannot see you with our physical eye, and we have no idea of how majestic, infinite, and great you are, but we know that you are the one to whom we look for redemption.”

“Our Father who art in heaven,” means that our salvation is rooted in heaven. Some people passionately want a salvation of this life and of this earth. They long for a day when they will see Jesus on this sin-cursed earth, but our salvation is infinitely more glorious than anything this earth can produce. We have become citizens of heaven, and eternally we will be with God in the new heavens and the new earth.

“Hallowed be thy name”

The word “Hallowed” is the word “holy,” which means “set apart.” Holy is thy name. Holy (set apart) is thy name. Each of us has a name to identify us among the people of the world. God needs no such identification because He alone is God. God does give Himself many names, such as Jesus, Christ, the Lord of Hosts, Faithful, True, etc. These names describe attributes or characteristics of God.

The references in the Bible which speak of the “name” of God are speaking of God in all of His fullness, in all of His essence, everything that God is. And He in all of His fullness is set apart (hallowed) as the only God, whom we are to fear, revere, obey, glorify, serve, and worship. He alone is supremely righteous. He is the creator of the world and upholds it by His power. He alone is the Savior; He is supremely holy and majestic.

“Thy kingdom come”

We read about the kingdom of God in John 3:3, “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And in John 3:5, “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Jesus is talking about the kingdom that God has established through the Lord Jesus Christ, which we enter into when we are saved. The kingdom of God consists of all who will become saved and live with Christ forever in the new heavens and the new earth. When we pray, “thy kingdom come,” we are saying, “Oh, God, I want to be part of your kingdom; I want to be saved. Thy kingdom come in my life.”

We are also saying, “Oh, Lord, we want thy kingdom to go out into the world and en-

compass all who are to be saved. We pray that the program of salvation which you designed from before the foundations of the earth will come to fruition.”

“Thy will be done”

The will of God is expressed, for example, in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The will of God is that He will redeem a people for Himself. He will bring salvation to this world, and that relates personally to each of us, i.e., “Thy will be done” in my life. God’s will will be done in my life only if I am saved, if I have become a child of God.

If you are unsaved, God’s will is not part of your life; if you are unsaved, you are going to live with your own will and not care about God’s will. “Thy will be done,” prayed from the heart means, “O God, make me obedient to thee; help me to abandon myself to thee. I want you to be my Savior.”

The will of God also includes the damnation of the unsaved. God’s justice will be completed. When the day comes, He will finish vengeance upon the unsaved; that is God’s business, and yet that is implied in the phrase, “thy will be done.”

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”

God’s will was established in heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ was in perfect obedience to the Father’s will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ said, “not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36). Christ in His perfect obedience illustrates the perfect will of God. We ought to pray as He prayed so that in our life we might be obedient to God.

“Give us this day our daily bread”

Many people conclude that God is teaching us to pray for physical sustenance. Of course, we are dependent upon God for clothing, housing, and food, but what about Luke 12:22-23, “And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?” He then says in verse 30, “For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.”

God gives no guarantee that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will always have a full bowl of rice. Whether we have enough to eat or not is immaterial. The big question that God wants us to face is: Are we spiritually nourished?

In Luke 11:3, Christ says, “Give us day by day our daily bread.” The word “daily” ought to be translated “for the morrow” or “for the coming.” It could be literally translated, “give us this day, or day by day, our bread for the morrow.” That is, “give us each day the spiritual bread (Christ is the living bread) that will sustain us throughout the future.”

In Matthew 6:11, the Bible says it a little differently but also focuses on our need for Christ. There we read, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Hebrews 1:5 helps us to understand this. There we read, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” “This day” is the same phrase that is used in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6, “Give us this day.” Hebrews 1:5 seems to imply that at some point in time, the Lord Jesus Christ was begotten by the Father. We know that is not possible because the Lord Jesus Christ is from everlasting to everlasting.

God is speaking about the coming Lord Jesus Christ who is spoken of as “begotten” inasmuch as God raised Him from the dead after He had paid for our sins. The phrase “this day” also refers to the Lord Jesus even as Psalm 118:24 implies, where God declares, “This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” And so, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” effectively is saying, “Thou art my Son, the Lord

Jesus Christ, whom I have raised from the dead.” Likewise, in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6, by the phrase “Give us this day our daily bread,” God is effectively saying, “Give us the Lord Jesus Christ as spiritual bread for tomorrow and forevermore.”

“Day by day”

In Luke, God says “day by day,” and when we tie this passage together with the phrase in Matthew 6:11, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we get this picture: “Give us Christ day by day, on a continuing basis, that we might have bread for the morrow,” from moment to moment. What is the bread that the Bible talks about? Jesus says in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

He says in John 6:51, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

When we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” effectively we are saying to God, “O God, give us the Lord Jesus Christ that we might be in Him, spiritually nourished and strengthened, so that we can walk day to day, moment to moment. Whatever the future holds, He is sufficient for us.”

“And forgive us our debts”

At least three words are commonly used in the New Testament to signify “sin,” including the word “debt.”

We are debtors to God because we have sinned. The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). There is a penalty that we must pay to God for our sins, and that payment is eternal destruction. When we pray, “forgive us our debts,” effectively, we are praying, “O God, have mercy on me. I’m a sinner. Will you pay the penalty that I rightly deserve to pay?”

The Lord Jesus came to endure that payment on our behalf. He came to ransom us from the power of the grave, from eternal destruction, from the wrath of God.

“As we forgive our debtors”

The Lord’s Prayer is focused on God our Savior until this phrase, which could be a bellwether or indicator as to where we stand before Christ.

The unsaved can be bitter, resentful, and angry if they believe they have been wronged by another person’s word or deed. The reason is because mankind by nature is egotistical and proud.

When God calls us, He effectively says, if you pray and acknowledge God as your Savior, and there is resentment in your heart for some individual whom

you cannot love, then examine your heart. You do not know what salvation is.

When we have resentment, we have to ask, “Am I born again? How can I expect God to forgive me if I continue with this unforgiven relationship?” The phrase “As we forgive our debtors,” therefore, is a reminder to examine ourselves to determine whether we are truly saved.

“And lead us not into temptation”

The word “temptation” can also be translated “trial.” Whenever Satan tempts us, endeavoring to make us sin, we are being tried. But God does not tempt anyone to try to make them fall into sin. In James 1:13-14 we read: “...for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

Moreover, God declares in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

That way of escape that God provides is salvation. When we have become saved we earnestly desire to be obedient to God. Remember, a man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts. Therefore, that

which to an unsaved person is a definite temptation to sin, is not a temptation to the true believer, because he is happiest when he is obeying God.

God comes to the human race with His law. If a person breaks that law, the inherent lusts that are characteristic of an unsaved person make that law a temptation to sin. However, it was not the law that God gave that caused that man to sin. Rather it was that man's own sinful desires. The law had been given to help him understand his need of a Savior. God tempts no one to commit sin. The way of escape which He provides is salvation.

Thus as we pray "lead (or bring) me not into temptation," we are praying for salvation so that we will no longer lust after sin, but will desire greater and greater obedience to God.

"Deliver us from evil"

The word "evil" here can be understood as Satan, as sin, and as the wrath to come.

Before we are saved, we are in bondage to Satan, and we are in bondage to sin. These are the terrible evils to which every human is enslaved.

But in addition we are under the wrath of God. The judgment

of God is a terrible evil that man is under because God's perfect justice demands full payment for sin. Therefore, the prayer "deliver us from evil" is also a prayer for salvation. To become saved is to be set free from bondage to sin and Satan and to be delivered from the wrath of God.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

The Lord's Prayer concludes with this marvelous doxology.

The focal point is on God: "Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed by thy name," then the focal point shifts to God's salvation program in the world and in my heart, which is all through Christ.

The Lord's Prayer is a magnificent prayer for mankind who desperately needs salvation. Jesus tells us how to pray. We are dead in our sins, and we are destined for destruction. Christ tells us in this beautiful prayer how we should seek salvation. And we see that all of the glory throughout eternity goes to God. Praise God for His wonderful salvation!

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