

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-15

Context

1. True sanctification (5:21-48)

2. False sanctification (6:1-18)

a. Looking good with respect to giving (6:1-4)

b. Looking good with respect to praying (6:5-15)

- The Lord's Prayer is well known even outside Christian communities and is perhaps the most memorized part of the Bible.
- This prayer is really the disciples' prayer and is a balance between spiritual and material concerns. It is best understood under the Old Covenant. Our forgiveness of others is the standard for our forgiveness by God. This is Old Covenant theology and it is why many evangelicals do not use the prayer in public services. **Eph.4:32**

Text

“⁹Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*' ¹⁴For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

A. Observations

1. There is no clear indication that the prayer is to be recited as it appears in the Bible. It is to be a guide of how to address God. Nowhere in the rest of the N.T. do we find reference to this prayer as a part of worship although it was used very early in the history of the church.
2. The prayer, like the rest of this sermon and much of Jesus' teaching, is to be framed in the context of the Jewish community under the Mosaic Code or Law. It has a number of distinctly Jewish features.
 - a. The word for “father” used here is the more formal word “pater”(PATER) rather than the informal Aramaic word “abba.” The informal word is used in reference to the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:15; Gal.4:6). While the Jews seldom referred to God as “father” (Isa.63:16; Mal.1:6; 2:10) they often saw him as protector and provider. Jesus, as the only begotten Son, introduced the idea of God as father.
 - b. “Hallowed be thy name” – Jews were not permitted to utter the name of YHWY because it was so holy.

- c. “Thy Kingdom come” – Jews were looking for the Messianic Age and pray for its arrival.
 - d. “As we also forgive others” – Forgiveness under the Old Covenant was not a settled matter. It was something one asked for and could expect to receive only if they lived up to the covenant’s demands.
 - e. Possible sources of the prayer. *A Kaddish (Jewish liturgical prayer), as translated by Christian scholar, Rev. John Gregorie, is as follows: "Our Parent which art in heaven, be gracious to us, O Lord, our God; hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of thee be glorified in heaven above and in the earth here below. Let thy kingdom reign over us now and forever. The holy men of old said, Remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against me. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing. For thine is the kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory for ever and for evermore."*
3. The last part of verse 14 does not appear in the oldest and best manuscripts of Matthew and it does not appear in Luke’s version of the prayer (11:2-4).

B. What does this teach us about prayer?

- 1. Some Christians do not recite this prayer because they feel that its context is different than the post Pentecost (New Covenant) Church context in which we live.
- 2. Everyone recognizes the fact that the prayer provides helpful guidelines of all of God’s people.
 - a. God is to be recognized as “Father” - provider and protector.
 - b. Our first concern in prayer should be God’s glory and will not ours.
 - c. We should petition God for both provision and protection in physical and spiritual spheres of life.
 - d. Pardon from sin and gracious living are high priorities in prayer. In the case of Christians, we should offer thanks and praise to God for the Cross and the Spirit as means of forgiveness and grace.
- 3. This prayer raises some important and controversial issues about the nature of the Old and New Covenants as they relate to forgiveness and grace in general.

C. How are we to understand Jesus’ teaching on conditional forgiveness? For more details see apptoteach.org theology files #107, #711, #713

- 1. There are degrees or levels of Christian knowledge (St. Augustine) and commitment. The point of dispute is with respect to a distinction between Level #3 and #4. Does true saving faith require a level #4 or #5 commitment (The Lordship Salvation view), or is level #3 all that is required (Free Grace view)?

Level #1
Intellectual awareness
“knowing about Christ”

Free Grace people are sometimes accused of believing that this is all that is necessary for salvation.

Level #2
Intellectual assent
“superficial confession of faith in Christ”
James 2:19 “the demons **believe** and shudder.”

This is what Free Grace people believe is necessary for salvation.

Level #3
Heartfelt Trust
“heartfelt confession of faith in Christ”
Rom.10:9 “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe **in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;”

Hope “counting on Christ as one’s righteousness”	Love “inner marker of true faith”	Justification “declared righteous”
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This is what some Discipleship Salvation people believe is necessary for salvation.

Level #4
Commitment of one’s life to serve God (good intentions)
“the process of sanctification”

Other Discipleship Salvation people believe this is necessary for salvation.

Level #5
Obedience (good works)
“outer marker of true faith”

- True faith is more than intellectual awareness or assent.
- True faith does not take the form of faithfulness.
- True faith always produces inner fruit (hope and love).
- True faith normally produces outer fruit (faithfulness).

D. The basic issues that need to be protected.

1. Salvation is by grace through faith apart from human merit.

- a. It is possible to have true saving faith and yet go to one's grave with unresolved moral conflicts in life.
 - b. It is possible to have true saving faith and look (outwardly at times) like a non-Christian. This was the case in first century Corinth.
2. True faith is a deep commitment of one's life. It is not a superficial confession of words.
 3. True saving faith always bears fruit; at least inwardly (new birth) and often outwardly (changed conduct).
 4. Repentance from sin is always needed as a part of our approach to God in worship. This implies that there will always be unresolved sins in a person's life. The Pharisee was criticized because he felt he no longer had sins to confess.
 5. Four different understandings of the relationship between faith and faithfulness.

<i>The Jewish position</i>	<i>The Roman Catholic position</i>	<i>The Lordship Salvation position</i>	<i>The Free Grace position</i>
Faithfulness is all that matters	Faithfulness is an expression of faith	Faithfulness is a marker of faith	Faithfulness is a fruit of faith
Faithfulness = Faith	Faith = Faithfulness	Faith/Faithfulness	Faith > Faithfulness

E. Concluding propositions

1. If one is to call on Christ to save from the penalty of sin, one is confessing and submitting to Christ as Master or Lord of at least one very important area of life — the soul's need for a substitutionary sacrifice and an imputed righteousness before a holy God.
2. Saving faith is not just a shallow intellectual confession of impersonal facts; it is a deep and genuine commitment to center one's hope in Christ.
3. It is possible for a person to make a false (superficial) profession of faith and actually believe that he or she is a Christian when in fact they are not.
4. The preeminent term by which salvation is received (in the Biblical record) is "faith" or "belief." Our "faithfulness", "obedience" or "works" are not the issue in the gospel of grace.
5. "Repentance" that leads to salvation is to be understood as turning from one's self-sufficiency to a commitment that Jesus is the Redeemer Christ. The notion of having to successfully turn from every known sin in order to be saved is not a part of the gospel message.

6. Justification (declared righteous by faith) and sanctification (progressively demonstrating righteous behavior) should not be mixed even though the later flows out of the former.

7. Repentance that leads to eternal life is distinct from “good works” but is the basis of and for the purpose of “good works.”

Acts 26:19-20 “¹⁹ Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but {kept} declaring both to those of Damascus first, and {also} at Jerusalem and {then} throughout all the region of Judea, and {even} to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, **performing deeds appropriate to repentance.**”

I Thess.1:9 “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God,”

8. It is possible for a genuine Christian to be “carnal” or live as though he or she was not a Christian. But this state is unnatural and normally is temporary.

9. To insist on a complete submission to God’s will in every area of life (before one can call themselves a Christian) is contrary to Biblical testimony and human experience.

10. If it is true that “we are not saved by our good works”, it must also be true that we are not saved by our good intentions. What saves us is not our works or our intentions but the work of Christ and our transfer of trust in anything and everything else to trust in him.

11. The best illustration of saving faith and faithfulness might be marriage. When a man and a woman go to the altar and make a marriage covenant vow it is expected that they then live as husband and wife. It would be technically possible for them to be truly married and yet not live as though they were married but this would be most unusual. On the other hand it is quite possible that they would not live out their marriage vows perfectly. There would be times when they would act selfishly and perhaps even unfaithfully but they would still be married. So it is in our relationship with Christ. At Baptism we enter into a covenant relationship with Christ. It is expected that we will also follow him as disciples but we will not do so perfectly. There may be times when we are quite rebellious to the point of acting as though we were not following Him at all. We might still however be true believers.

F. What can Christians learn from the Lord’s Prayer?

1. Through its metaphors, this model prayer tells us important things about God:

a. Family – God is a Father

b. Nation – God is a King

c. Plan – God is a Manager

- d. Supply – God is a Provider
 - e. Conflict – God is a Defender
2. “our Father who art in heaven”
 - a. How could God have presented Himself? Lord, King, Friend, etc.
 - b. What does the image of Father (family) imply?
 - c. What can we expect from God as our Father?
 - d. How significant is “biological family” to Kingdom life? Luke 14:26, Matt.10:37, Matt.12:48-50
 3. “thy Kingdom come”
 - a. What does “kingdom” imply?
 - b. If God’s kingdom is not of this world (Jn.18:36) does that mean that God has no interest in the institutions of this life?
 4. “They will be done”
 - a. What is the nature of God’s plan?
 - b. How can we know God’s will? (see apptoteach.org theology files #205, #306)
 - c. Should we ever pray for our will to be done?
 5. “Give us this day our daily bread”
 - a. What is the significance of “this day” and “daily”?
 - b. Guidelines for praying for material needs:
 1. Don’t feel guilty about doing so.
 2. Be sure that you are not asking to find your security in material or temporal possessions.
 3. What do you really desire – more stuff or contentment?
 4. Who is viewed as your source for material needs in this life?
 6. “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”
 - a. Spiritual conflict (warfare) calls for prayer.
 - b. **Eph.6:18** “with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”
 7. Concluding guidelines
 - a. Approach prayer as a family time.
 - b. Respect the integrity of the Kingdom.
 - c. Recognize and respect God’s plan.
 - d. Petition God as our source.
 - e. Use prayer in spiritual warfare.