

Session 8 The Most Famous Apostolic Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

I. THE MODEL PRAYER (MT. 6:9-13)

- A. What a gift and privilege it is to learn about prayer from the One who is the greatest teacher and who had the greatest prayer life! Matthew 6:9-13 is one of the most familiar passages in the Bible, yet so few have searched out its deeper treasures. Its over-familiarity has resulted in many being content with a superficial view of its glorious contents. This is a very important passage, since prayer is the primary way God releases His power through His people.
- B. Jesus gave us a model of prayer (Mt. 6:9-13) based on what God is like and on the nature of the kingdom. It covers foundational truths about prayer that are expanded upon throughout Scripture. Jesus told us the truths that we must know and keep central in our quest to grow strong in prayer.
“In this manner, therefore, pray: our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” (Mt. 6:9)
- C. Jesus pointed out six requests that we should pray. The first three focus on God's glory (His name, kingdom, and will). The second three focus on man's needs (physical, relational, and spiritual).

II. OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

- A. Jesus' teaching on prayer starts with focusing on who God is—our Father in heaven. Foundational to a strong prayer life is a right view of God as our Father. In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer declared that a low view of God has been the biggest problem in the Church in every generation. As we pray, we must intentionally take time to recall who He is according to His Word.
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” (Mt. 6:9)
- B. In the time of Jesus, the Jewish people saw God as transcendent creator and King. They trembled before His great power. Jesus taught them that God their creator was also their Father. “In heaven” points to the Father's powerful transcendence. Jesus combined these two truths about the Lord—He is both *powerful* and *personal*. He connected God's fatherly love with His heavenly power, His transcendence with His tenderness, and His exalted place in glory with His bowing down so low.
- C. As our heavenly Father, He is deeply personal, yet terrifying in His majesty. He is a Father who longs for a relationship of deep partnership with us in which He trains (disciplines), provides for, protects, and directs us with tenderness. We are to draw near to His tender heart with confidence, love, and humility. In relating to His children, He expresses the fullness of ideal fatherhood. Some neglect this revelation and depersonalize God, presenting Him as majestic, but distant and harsh.
- D. We will understand more about the glory of our Father, as we see glimpses of His transcendence.
- E. We are awed by seeing such a glorious Father who longs for relationship with weak people like us.
- F. ***Our***: He is not only *my* Father; He is *our* Father. Our prayer requests are tempered with the reality of who we are to God *as one family*. We are to have an inclusive attitude as we pray for the Father's blessing on others in the larger family of believers and not for ourselves only.

G. Revelation 4 is one of the great passages on the Father's beauty and throne. I see four categories, each having three themes. These twelve details have many implications.

1. The beauty of **God's person**: how God looks, feels, and acts (4:3)
2. The beauty of **God's people**: the Church enthroned, robed, and crowned (4:4)
3. The beauty of **God's power**: manifested in the lightning, thunder, and voices (4:5a)
4. The beauty of **God's presence**: His fire on lamps, seraphim, and the sea (4:5b-7; 15:2)

²A throne set in heaven...³He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne...like an emerald. ⁴Around the throne were twenty-four thrones...I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns...⁵From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne...⁶Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...around the throne, were four living creatures...⁸they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy..." (Rev. 4:2-8)

H. Jesus set the context of intimacy with God within His sovereignty and majesty. Some only see Him as a tender Father, without seeing His heavenly glory. Others see His heavenly glory without seeing His nature as a Father with deep love. Some see Him as a Father who is personal and tender, but do not tremble before His transcendence; they portray the Father as a familiar and fun-loving buddy. These views are based on bad, shallow theology and very little personal experience of God.

III. PRAYING FOR GOD'S GLORY (MT. 6:9-10): THREE REQUESTS

A. ***Petition #1 Praying for God's name to be hallowed***: This petition is that God's majestic name be hallowed, or acknowledged as holy (transcendent and pure), and be revealed *to us and through us*. God's name refers to His person, character, and authority.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." (Mt. 6:9)

1. We ask the Lord to release a greater measure of power to cause more people to acknowledge the truth about Him. We pray that the Father would receive the highest place in our life, heart, and worship and that others would respond to His name in the way in which He is worthy.
2. God-centered Christianity prays *hallowed be Your name*, or "Help us to honor Your name." We pray, "Lord, work in me and others so that we acknowledge Your greatness."
3. We revere God's name by not asking for things that we know are against His will or that would defame His glorious name.
4. Many take God's name in vain, using it in jest or in expressions of contempt and anger.

B. ***Petition #2 Praying for the kingdom to come***: This petition asks for an increase of the kingdom, which is the place where God's Word is obeyed, His will is done, and His power expressed. The kingdom is manifested when the sick are healed and demons are cast out (Mt. 11:5; 12:28). This is a prayer for God's saving power to be openly manifested on earth in a greater measure.

¹⁰"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt. 6:10)

1. The kingdom of God is manifested partially in this age, then in fullness when Jesus returns to earth. The kingdom is "already, but not yet"—it is already here, but not yet fully here (Mt. 3:1-2; 4:17, 23; 6:10, 33; 10:7; 12:28; 13:11; 16:18-19; 19:12; Mk. 4:11, 26; 9:1; Lk. 16:16; 17:20-21; 18:16, 29-30; Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 30-31; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20).
2. Seek to know what God is doing in your generation, and then throw yourself fully into it.
3. It includes being kingdom-minded in our lifestyle and attitudes toward others. We are to work together with other believers, and not have a territorial attitude of being focused only on our own sphere of authority and influence.

- C. ***Petition #3 Praying for God's will to be done:*** This request includes our personal obedience in the context of His kingdom purposes. His will consists of His commands and our ministry assignment.

¹⁰"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt. 6:10)

1. Jesus defined loving God as being deeply rooted in a spirit of obedience (Jn. 14:21). There is no such thing as loving God without seeking to obey His Word in our personal lives.

¹⁵"If you love Me, keep My commandments...²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...²³If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." (Jn. 14:15-23)

2. There is no substitute for obedience in our private lives. Some are passionate about ministry to others, focused on evangelism, justice issues, healing the broken (physically, emotionally, relationally, etc.), but are not as diligent about obeying Jesus in their personal lives.

IV. PRAYING FOR OUR PERSONAL NEEDS (MT. 6:11-13): THREE REQUESTS

- A. The next three requests are for our needs—*physical* (daily bread), *relational* (forgiveness), and *spiritual* (deliverance from evil). Jesus commanded us to bring our personal requests to God in prayer. These prayers express our dependence on God in every area of our life.

- B. ***Petition #4 Praying for our daily provision:*** This request is for our *daily* provision, protection, and direction (spiritual and physical). *Bread* refers here to our daily natural needs.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. (Mt. 6:11)

1. We do not pray to inform God of our needs (Mt. 6:7-8), but to enhance our relationship with Him and to express gratitude (Ps. 50:15).
2. Asking God for our needs does not free us from the responsibility to work (2 Thes. 3:10). He meets our needs in part by giving us the ability and the opportunity to earn a living.

- C. ***Petition #5 Praying for forgiveness:*** This petition concerns our relationship with God and people. The proof that we have been forgiven is that we are compelled to forgive others with gratitude.

¹²"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Mt. 6:12)

D. Jesus did not say, "Forgive us our debts *because* we forgave our debtors." We compare Scripture with Scripture to see the truth more clearly. Believers are freely justified by faith, so when they ask for forgiveness, it is to restore their fellowship with God (1 Jn. 1:9), not to be saved from hell. Jesus told Peter that he was *completely clean*, so he needed only to have his feet washed (Jn. 13:10).

⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful...to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn. 1:9)

E. ***Petition #6 Praying for deliverance from evil:*** The sixth petition has caused much discussion. Since God never tempts anyone with evil (Jas. 1:13), why would we ask God "not to lead us into temptation?" Meaning, we are praying that God leads us in ways to "escape" tempting situations.

¹³"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Mt. 6:13, NIV, RSV)

F. Many agree that Jesus was using a figure of speech to express the same thing in two different ways—leading away from temptation and being delivered from, or escaping, evil. This is clear when we read both parts of the one request—*lead us not into temptation* **and** *deliver us from evil*. The second half of the request defines positively what the first half expresses negatively.

G. Jesus urged the apostles to pray that they enter *not into temptation* (Mt. 26:41; Lk. 22:40). To enter temptation speaks of something far more intense than the general temptations we all face. It is a specific "storm of temptation" attacking us, a time when three components come together—when *demonic activity* is heightened, our *lusts are aroused*, and *circumstances are optimum* for sin.

⁴¹"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mt. 26:41)

³¹"Satan has asked for you [Peter], that he may sift you as wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; when you have returned to Me..." (Lk. 22:31-32)

H. There are "opportune" times when demonically-energized temptations hit us like a storm. Praying before a "storm of temptation" hits us expresses humility that depends on God's strength and acknowledges our weakness. These "pre-temptation prayers" for help "....." are a preemptive strike against Satan's attack against us. We can reduce the temptation by praying this way.

¹³The devil ended every temptation...he departed from Him until an opportune time. (Lk. 4:13)

³⁴"Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶Watch and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things...and to stand before the Son of Man." (Lk. 21:34-36)

I. David prayed for deliverance from sinful situations even before they occurred (Ps. 19:12-13).

¹²Cleanse me from secret [unperceived] faults. ¹³Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless... (Ps. 19:12-13)