

The Citizen's Model Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

Introduction

I heard the story of a man who encountered a bit of trouble while flying his airplane. He called the control tower and said, "Pilot to tower, I'm 300 miles from the airport, six hundred feet above ground, and I'm out of fuel. I am descending rapidly. Please advise. Over." "Tower to Pilot" the dispatcher began. "Repeat after me: "Our Father Who art in heaven. . ."

It has been called the Lord's prayer but is more properly called the Disciple's prayer. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount we might think of it as the Citizen's model prayer. The prayer is also listed in Luke 11:1-4 in the context of a conversation where the Disciples ask Jesus "teach us to pray". It is a model or a pattern that helps us organize our prayer needs or burdens so that we can comply with God's will. The prayer is striking in its brevity, simplicity and completeness.

Jesus uses the plural nouns; "Our Father" (v.9); "Give us" (v.11); "forgive us" (.12); "lead us" (v. 13); it is a corporate prayer or family prayer plan. We sometimes pray alone (Matt.6:6) but in a sense we are not alone because we are a part of a family (Eph.3:14-15). Jesus teaches us that when we pray we put God's concerns first (v.9); and our own concerns later. True prayer is based on Sonship not friendship (v.9).

In the verses preceding our text Jesus mentioned the kinds of prayers God rejects; boasting prayers (v.5); babbling prayers (vv.7-8)—and we would be hard pressed to make the case that Jesus meant the model prayer to be a babbling prayer!

In the prayer Jesus lists nine elements or aspects of personal prayer.

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| 1. Faith (v.9a) | "Our Father in heaven" |
| 2. Worship (v.9b) | "Hallowed be Your name" |
| 3. Expectation (v.10a) | "May Your Kingdom Come" |
| 4. Submission (v.10b) | "May Your will be done here on earth, just as in heaven" |
| 5. Petition (v.11) | "Give us this our daily bread" |
| 6. Confession (v.12a) | "and forgive us our debts" |
| 7. Compassion (v.12b) | "as we forgive our debtors" |
| 8. Dependence (v.13a) | "and do not lead us into temptation" |
| 9. Acknowledgement (v.13b) | "yours is the Kingdom, the power, the glory" |

A Prayer Of Surrender (v.9)

Matthew 6:9 (NKJV) *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

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Faith and fellowship are linked. God is our Father. Prayer begins in faith with a personal relationship with the God of the Bible. In the New Testament Jesus uses the term "Father" some 150 times and "God" once.

Prayer continues in worship. "Hallowed be Your name." The word (hagiastheto) means to be counted holy; to be treated holy; to be counted or treated with the profound respect.

Can we call God our Father and refuse to surrender to God? Can we call God Father and demand a paternity test? Can we call God Father and at the same time exalt some other god like materialism (the god of matter); or rationalism (the god of my ability to think) or empiricism (the god who I can observe).

In John's Gospel Jesus claimed that God was His Father and He claimed equality with the Father; (John 8:17) "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working"—(18) and the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God"—in the language it reads *pateraidion- literally "HIS OWN FATHER"*. It is absurd to pray to the God of the Bible and refuse to acknowledge His Sovereignty and Paternity. A person who prays our Father is surrendering his or her independence and is accepting God's claims to be rightful ruler.

You cannot have a personal relationship with God apart from Christ. "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God to those who believe in His name" (John 1:11-12). No one else has that right. "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (v.13). If prayer is sharing and fellowship with God—how can you share and fellowship with God and remain in rebellion? How can you claim Christ's Father and reject Christ's claims?

If you surrender to God—you surrender to Heaven—the spiritual world—the dimension where God dwells in splendor and glory and power and majesty. With faith comes surrender and with surrender comes worship.

The word heaven (here in v.9) is plural—heavens. The Bible speaks of three heavens—the atmosphere that surrounds the earth—the outer space of heavenly bodies—we might think of this as the physical universe—and the place beyond the physical boundaries of time and space—a place where God's presence is fully manifest—this is a spiritual place—some people who hear the words "spiritual place" think— "a place not real"—but nothing could be further from the truth. God is present in this world—in this universe—but God is also present—in another world—another dimension—a space so vast and more real than we are capable of imagining. God's throne is in Heaven (Psalm 103:19) not outer space! The Bible teaches that from Heaven's vantage God sees all the sons of men; the inhabitants of the earth; and considers all their works.

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When a person truly surrenders to God; acknowledging God's authority, majesty, sovereignty, power, when a person surrenders to God and acknowledges God has the ultimate and only source—that person is ready to present his or her needs to God.

A Prayer Of Petition And Plea (vv.10-13)

10Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

Your Father is both Lord and King. He has a kingdom. Prayer by faith—prayer—fueled by worship—generates expectation. And what is it that we can expect? “Your kingdom come.” This is the first request to be prayed. Let your kingdom come right here on this earth. The Kingdom is that place where the King is sovereign. Let Jesus rule in the hearts of all human beings everywhere. Why place this petition and plea first? It is the very message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the message Jesus taught and preached; the message the early Disciples taught, preached and prayed. It is also the longing of God—when all people everywhere turn from their sin and turn to the Savior as Lord and King! That human beings would personally, willingly, voluntarily, submit to Him and serve Him. And do this all day—every day—in all thoughts and deeds. This is the very fabric of our lives—or at least it should be. We love and live for His Majesty—our effort and energies devoted to Christ as King.

Jesus begins his preaching message with “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt.3:2). “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:7).

Your kingdom come is future. It is a request for something that doesn't presently exist. And yet it is available—and desperately needed in a world so terribly broken. Our world lies in a state of bitter rebellion, marked by wickedness, consumed and contaminated by evil, murder, injustice, deprivation and hunger. God's rule and reign are needed now. We are invited to consider the urgency to pray—and to pray consistently—your kingdom come—your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Think for a moment. This is the prayer's second request. In God's kingdom there is no will other than His will. And yet there are four wills—that call out for our love—loyalty—obedience.

One of those is our very own will. The other is the individual and collective demands of those we come in contact with. The will of parents, friends, rulers, and people who want to influence us. There is Satan's will. In John 8 Jesus defends a woman caught in the act of adultery—and reminds her accusers they to are sinners. He boldly proclaims to be the light of the world and the religious leaders challenged Jesus and asked if he were greater than their Father Abraham. Jesus said, “Before Abraham was—I am.” They understood Jesus was making an extraordinary claims. The religious leaders claimed freedom because Abraham was their father. Jesus responded with the observation that all unsaved people are not free but are enslaved by sin. Then Jesus said that Satan was their true father not Abraham. “You are of your father the devil, and

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the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

But there is also God's will. And what is God's will? God's will is found in God's desires—God's guidance—God's instructions—and purposes. In the Old Testament the Lord spoke through prophets, led the Children of Israel in a cloud of smoke and pillar of fire. But God has spoken to us in these last days through Jesus Christ our Lord. When Jesus was asked the question; "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:28-29).

In order to do God's will you must know God's will. This is why we study to show ourselves approved unto God. God's will is found in God's Word. God's will is God's plan in the message of salvation.

In our prayer there is faith, worship, expectation—and submission. We know God's will and we submit to God's will.

Islam begins with submission—but it is a submission that is deeply disconnected from Biblical faith, Biblical worship—and God honoring expectations. In Christ—we yield ourselves to God who has brought us back to life (Rom. 6:13).

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

Our previous petitions are rooted in submission. In broad categories the prayer began with an invocation; and continues in petition. Our petitions fall into two broad categories—petitions for God's glory—petitions for man's good. The order is God first—then self—then the world. We pray for God's glory—his name reveals His glory—hallowed by thy name. We pray for God's kingdom—the future rule of the Father—brought near—in the Son—God's will—His universal plan—revealed and then obeyed.

Our petitions have included (1) thy kingdom come; (2) and thy will be done; and now petition (3) "give us daily bread".

In the original the passage does not read daily bread—but rather "this day—bread". The meaning seems to be—sufficient—or needful. Bread for our souls—bread for our body. Does this mean bread for our souls and bodies? Bread is basic to life. It is the symbol of survival and the full life. We seek and work for our own bread. We ask for necessities. We confess our inadequacy and dependence on God! It is God who give us seed—and the earth—who brings forth bread for our enjoyment.

Do you depend upon God for your daily provision? The rich are tempted to trust their riches. The poor are tempted to steal. In Proverbs (30:8-9) "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me

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with food convenient (that I need) for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of the my God in vain" (Pr.30:8-9).

Have you ever heard someone say; "I did this to survive".

We are invited to ask our Father to meet our needs. We are asked to consider that much of the world is starving literally—and most of the world is starving spiritually.

There is a famine for the Bread of Life.

And God cares for us. He cares about our physical and spiritual needs. We are given permission to ask for necessities of life—daily (here v.11); God sent Jesus to this world in a human body. God raised Jesus from the dead in a glorified body. Our bodies are called "the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

12And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Bread for our soul and body and forgiveness for ourselves and others. Both debt and forgiveness are interchangeable terms. The Vulgate (Latin) reads "trespasses" and sin is considered in the Scripture to be both a debt owed to God and missing of the mark established by God. A debt is something owed—a legal obligation.

What are you praying—when you pray—"and forgive us our debts"? You are asking God to forgive the sin debt! We have failed God in our duty. We must therefore ask God to forgive our debt. We are asking God to forgive the debt of guilt or punishment. One who has failed to pay his debt is guilty—and therefore invites punishment—consequences.

Our forgiveness of others—does not provide the grounds for our personal pardon—but a comparable condition ("in the same way")—in the same way God forgives you—forgive others.

Does God forgive you—absent Christ? Does God forgive you absent faith? Does God forgive you absent repentance? Absent the Gospel? Absent reconciliation?

Petition (bread); becomes confession (forgiveness for personal sins); and generates compassion (forgiveness for injuries).

This is why Jesus said, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25). "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). "Forbearing one another forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

A Prayer Of Praise (v.13)

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13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

In our model prayer Jesus acknowledges we need help in overcoming the evil one. Satan is clever and determined.

We submit to God (your will be done); we petition God (give us daily bread); we confess our sins (forgive our debts); we exercise compassion towards others (forgive our debtors) we acknowledge our dependence upon the Sovereign Lord (lead us not into temptation). What does Jesus mean? We know that God does not solicit human beings to sin—God tempts no man (James 1:13). Jesus allows us to petition God to keep us from the awful pull of temptation—we acknowledge our weakness—against the pull of sin. This is the fifth petition.

The Bible teaches that the believer is delivered from the curse of the law (Gal.5:1); from the condemnation of sin (Rom.8:1-3) and bondage or servitude to sin (Rom.6:18). We are delivered from the evil in this world (Gal.1:4) and the powers of darkness (Col.1:13). The writer of Hebrews prays that God would deliver us from “an evil conscience” (Heb.10:22) by the application of the blood of Christ. We pray to be delivered from an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12)—by embracing an unshakable faith in the promises of God and the Word of God. We are delivered from this present evil world by living for the purposes that Christ has for us—because He died for us and gave Himself for us (Gal.1:4).

We must keep mind always; “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8a).

Our sins are forgiven (v.12). We ask God to keep us from sinning again. Two things are essential to keep us from sin (1) deliverance from temptation and (2) deliverance from the evil one. The request—is necessary—because all believers are tempted and all believers are tempted often. We pray against temptation—because sin grieves our Father’s heart and because sin—leads to trouble, pain, guilt, grief for ourselves and others!

What is our prayer and praise? The words are called the doxology—and some scholars believe it was added later and used in public worship. We praise God in our prayers. The prayer begins in surrender and ends in praise. The angels praise God. We praise God. God deserves our praise. God created us with the capacity to praise Him.

A Prayer Of Commitment (v.13)

“Amen.”

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For most Christians 'Amen' means 'the end'. But for the Jew the word meant "so be it" or "so shall it be". When God says—"Amen" it means this will be done. Amen means "let it be".

One little girl said to her mother; "Mommy, I'm not going to say 'Amen' to my prayers anymore. I'm going to say 'RSVP'. Répondez s'il vous plaît, literally "Reply if you please" or "Reply please".

It is a word ripe with commitment. When we pray the Lord's prayer and finish with Amen we are committing ourselves to do our part in our invocation, petitions and praise. Someone once said; "When you pray, pray as though everything depended on God. When you work, work as though everything depended on you."

A young boy quoted the Westminster Confession Shorter Catechism; "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to annoy Him forever."

What is our part? We pray. In both humility and boldness. We pray because we are told to pray. We pray—as Jesus taught us—and the models provided to us by Peter and Paul and John and the other New Testament writers. We pray. To defeat the devil. We pray. To strengthen the saints. We pray—because prayer provides peace and wisdom—keeps us from sin and reveals the will of God. We pray—in faith—sincerity—simplicity—persistence—and in accord with God's will and God's character.

Conclusion

The prayer is a guide—to see God's purpose—to understand God's blessing—in brevity and simplicity and sufficiency. The prayer is also a test. Do we really love our Lord? Do we really place Him first in our affection and ambition? Do we care about the lost? Will we examine our hearts to confess our sin? Will we allow the Holy Spirit to generate compassion in our hearts for those who have sinned against us? Will we believe God will answer our prayers in childlike trust?