

The Lord's Prayer I – Matthew 6:9-10

INTRODUCTION – After salvation, the life of the believer is transformed forever. He has new relationships that are revealed by Christ in His Sermon on the Mount. These relationships include his understanding of the Word of God which will be the lamp unto his feet and light unto his path; his relationship with God through his giving, prayer and fasting; his relationship with his possessions, and finally his relationship with all the people in his life. The one who is born again in Christ will experience all the above new experiences in life. He cannot help it because his salvation is not the work of man but of God. He is a new person in Christ. These new relationships will be part of his new nature in Christ. He experiences them like a newly born baby experiences breathing and drinking the moment he comes out of his mother's womb! This is a clear evidence of a believer's salvation in Christ. He lives according to these experiences which Christ calls the narrow way that leads to the narrow gate. When he opens the narrow gate, i.e. the end of his life, eternal life awaits him. Another of such new experiences is prayer.

Every believer needs to pray correctly. There are proper acceptable procedures or protocol when we approach or interact with people. One has no right to approach anyone in any way one likes. Similarly, a child cannot speak with his parents any way he likes, but he must do so respectfully. Such protocols are especially important when we approach God almighty. We cannot call Him "dad" or "papa" even though these are terms of endearment that we use to address our earthly fathers. God is NOT our earthly father even though we call Him Father! Thank God that Christ has taught all believers how they ought to pray!

I. The Addressee in Prayer – 6:9a

It is crucial that we address the One we pray to according to how He wants to be addressed. The Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to address the One we pray to as "Our Father which art in heaven", i.e. "Our heavenly Father." Who is he that dares to call the almighty God his heavenly Father? Only the children of God can! Why is a sinner, who was born in sin and committed so many sins in his life, suddenly able to call God his heavenly Father? We know from the Bible that all sinners are God's enemies (cf. James 4:4). They can never have their prayers heard by the holy God unless it is the prayer of repentance to accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Other than this prayer for sinners, God will not hear any of their cries no matter how desperate their cries are. Sinners cannot even see the kingdom of God let alone enter into the kingdom of God to approach Him who sits on His throne!

Thank God all of God's children are able to because of the transformation done by God in their lives. When the sinner accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, Christ baptizes him with the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit dwells in him forever. He is no longer a sinner but a saint, i.e. a holy person. He is no longer an enemy of God. He is now a child of God. As a child of God he can enter into the presence of God anytime and anywhere! His God will hear his prayers. Only when he regards iniquities in his heart will the Lord not hear him.

It is important that when the child of God approaches God, he addresses God correctly. The doctrine of how to pray was the first thing that Christ taught His disciples. He says to us that a child can address God as his Father. His Father is the same as Christ's Father! That is why Christ used the first plural personal pronoun "our." The believer is to call God "our Father." This also teaches us that fellow believers are brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a family relationship that he has as he serves God on earth. He is NOT alone! His eternal family is with him. He can get help from them just as they ought to receive help from him. This mutual help is crucial. This help includes caring for each other's spiritual well being which means that they are to be each other's keeper as brothers and sisters.

To ensure that familiarity does not breed contempt, the Lord reminds us that He is called Father but He is also in heaven whereas we are on earth, thus the phrase “which art in heaven” is used by Christ. The demonstrative pronoun “which” is used here, instead of “who”, because in Greek the demonstrative pronoun “that” in the accusative is used. The KJV translators used the demonstrative pronoun “which” to be as faithful to the original text as possible. It does not mean that God is a thing. This is how the Greek language works. It follows the gender very specifically. God is our heavenly Father and must always be reverentially approached. We must not treat God as if He is our buddy. The tendency with the modern first world mindset is to commit the sin of disrespect. There are foolish parents who think that the way to bring up their children is to go down to their level and allow their children to address them by their first names. They are their “friends!” This is absurd! Their children are NOT their friends. Their children are their children and must be told and taught that their parents are to be respected and not to be belittled. The hierarchy between the parent and the child must be maintained at all times. In this manner we will also not forget that although God says to enter into His presence boldly and at all times, the reverence must always be maintained. This means that God’s children should approach God according to God’s prescribed standard! Clean hands and pure hearts must be the norm for all believers who approach God through Christ!

II. The Motive in Prayer – 6:9b

The only motivation behind all our prayers is our heavenly Father’s Name. When we pray it must be to hallow His holy Name. This means to venerate His holy Name. The Christian’s sin cannot tarnish God’s holiness or His being. But when the Christian sins, he can tarnish the holy Name of God especially the Name of Christ which he bears whenever he says he is a Christian. This is a great privilege that God has given to sinful men when He revealed Himself in Christ. He did not have to do so if He did not want to save anyone. But He did want to save many. This means that the many that are saved and are left behind on earth to witness for Christ can tarnish the holy Name of God by their sin! One of the ways that God will not allow this to happen is that He will not answer any prayer that will tarnish His holy name. In other words, all prayers that will not hallow God’s holy Name will not be answered by God.

Some selfish or man-centred prayers with selfish motives that cause God to not answer would include heal our sick child because we cannot bear to live without him; that we will not be retrenched because we are not able to pay for our mortgage; save our loved ones because we love them very much and cannot bear to see them in hell. How will the answer to these prayers hallow the holy Name of God? If they will not hallow God’s holy Name, God will not answer. This is the only motivation given to us by Christ to help us to pray correctly.

To hallow God’s Name in our prayers is to ensure that all that we pray for is for God’s glory and not man’s. This means to pray according to the will of God as revealed in Holy Scriptures. For example, when we pray for the salvation of loved ones, it is to be based upon God’s mercy and grace. We know that our loved ones deserve hell as they have sinned against God grievously. They have been rejecting God’s love in Christ for many years. Some have mocked and laughed when the gospel was shared. We are to plead for God’s mercy and pray that the Name of God will be magnified if our loved ones were to accept Christ. A biblical example would be Moses’ prayer to the LORD after Israel made the golden calf and worshipped it at the foot of the quaking Mount Sinai in **Exodus 32:9-14**, “And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people: **10** Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. **11** And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? **12** Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them

out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. **13** Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever. **14** And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.”

III. The Desire in Prayer – 6:10

Our desire should not be to change the mind and will of God to fit into our will. It is to pray for God’s will to be done on earth. This teaching is encapsulated in the phrase “Thy kingdom come.” In God’s kingdom, His will is always done perfectly. To pray for God's kingdom to come is to pray for God to rule absolutely on earth whereby His desiderative will will be done on earth or at least in the believer’s life. As of right now, while the believer serves the Lord on earth he knows that the desiderative will of God is being thwarted and despised by a world where Satan is god. The evil and wickedness of sinful men abound. Lawlessness has overcome the law. Everyone continues to do what is right in his own eyes. But the child of God’s earnest cry to his heavenly Father must be for His will to be done on earth especially in his life. His prayers are not to twist the arm of God to do what is right in his own eyes like the world around him. His prayers must be to seek the will of God and to submit to it willingly, obediently and cheerfully.

Whatever the will of his heavenly Father is, he must know in his heart that his heavenly Father will always give to him the best that will bring glory and honour to His holy Name. As long as the children of God serve and live on this earth, they know that they are to do their heavenly Father’s will. This means that they will submit themselves to whatever their heavenly Father wants them to experience on the earth no matter how painful - physically, emotionally or mentally - their suffering for Christ might be. They must endure knowing that their heavenly Father will not allow them to endure a trial that is beyond their ability to bear. **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*.” Their prayer to God for help must be to submit to the heavenly Father’s will. This submission will result in the strengthening of their faith and trust in the Lord. Their head knowledge that they learned from God's Word will be turned to experiential knowledge.

APPLICATION

Prayer is the most endearing spiritual gift that God has given to all His children. It is most intimate. Through prayer we see that God wants all His children on earth to draw nigh to Him at all times. God knows that our service on earth is fraught with deadly temptations that can wreck our holy witness for Christ. He wants us to know that we are dear to Him and He must also be dear to us. He gives us the honour to address Him as our heavenly Father whenever we pray. Our prayers must always be for the glory of His holy name and no one else. To accomplish this we need to always seek His holy will for our lives as we serve Him on earth. We need to submit to His holy will for us whenever we pray. This way all our prayers will surely hallow His holy Name. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should parents of young children and Sunday School teachers pray to Jesus or to God?
2. You visit a church member's father in hospital and share the gospel with him. You ask if he wants to receive Christ but he says no. He does not have long to live according to the doctors. But his family wants to keep this truth from him. Before you leave, you pray for him. What should the emphasis of your prayer be?
3. One of your children is sick in the hospital and the doctor said that his condition is terminal. As a loving parent, how would you pray for your child who has already accepted Christ?
4. A Christian woman's husband is critically sick. She has been praying for his salvation for many years but he has resisted. She has also shared the gospel with him many times. While in hospital, he asks her to pray for him. What should the gist of her prayer be?
5. The congregation is spiritually lethargic as many are not serving and witnessing. As a concerned member, what would the gist of your prayer to God be?

The Lord's Prayer -- Matthew 6:9-15 "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. **10** Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. **11** Give us this day our daily bread. **12** And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. **13** 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. **14** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: **15** But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."