

The Lord's Prayer Part 1

Prayer

I love the pathways that these scriptures carry us along. And I also love the guidance that God has given to us in our preaching and teaching of these words, that of following along, verse by verse, never leaving out any part of them.

And here today, we arrive at one of the most important and most quoted portions of these scriptures, "The Lord's Prayer". And because these words are so very important, I hope to spend several weeks examining each of the precious instructions given within this prayer.

And I want to begin by confessing to you that I really wish that I could be a better "prayer". Why do I say that? Please know that it's not because I don't pray. I do! I have a set time each day when I pray. In my prayers I acknowledge God and His position of great honor and power. I ask the Holy Spirit to reveal my sins to me and I repent of them. I often even ask the Holy Spirit to pray my prayer for me.

Then I pray for all the right things and all the right people, this church and all of you, my family, my friends, many who are unsaved, several widows and widowers, several who grieve the loss of their loved ones, and on and on. And I pray these prayers every day.

And then, also all throughout my day, there are numerous times that I pray, asking the Lord for guidance in matters that are taking place. And also thanking Him for all the many provisions and blessings that He so generously showers upon me and my family. And I am also continually asking Him to help me with all the many things that I'm thinking and saying and doing.

But with all of that being as it is, I still seem to fall short of being what I believe to be a "good prayer". And again, I really do want to be a "good prayer".

Through all the many years of my being a Christian, I have been in the presence of some of the "best prayers" I could ever imagine. For several years, I had a "prayer partner", Dr. Paul Culley, who would stop by my office every few days and would pray with me. I can recall some of the most beautiful prayers I have ever heard. And the best part was, as he would begin to pray, it would seem as

if he was beginning “mid-sentence”, that he was simply continuing a prayer that he had already started, that perhaps he never was “not praying”. Isn’t that a wonderful thought? I want to pray like that folks! I really want to pray like that!

Well, with all that being said, we will begin to do today the thing that God has laid out for us to do, and that is to follow along with these next verses in our journey through this Book of Luke, and begin to study the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

And may I say at the beginning, while many bible scholars believe this prayer given here in Luke chapter 11 is the same occasion as the one given in the Book of Matthew, chapter 6, for myself, I am comfortable believing that Jesus might have given this prayer on more than one occasion, perhaps several occasions. That’s because He had many disciples besides the twelve. And He may have even thought it necessary to repeat the prayer for anyone in the crowd who might not have heard it.

Whichever it may be, let’s begin by reading these words given here in Luke chapter 11, beginning in verse 1.

¹Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

²So He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. ³ Give us day by day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.” (Luke 11:1-4)

And for clarity, listen as I read the more familiar words of the Lord’s Prayer given in Matthew chapter 6, using the King James Version of the bible,

⁹ 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, forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)

Please note that the last part of verse 13, a Doxology, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” may have been added by the

translators of scripture and may not have been in the original text. But because these words present no harm to the original text, most Christian believers accept them as being within God's Will.

And also note that in the Matthew version of this precious prayer, Jesus gave a preamble warning saying,

⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Mathew 6:5-8)

All of these scriptures that are contained within this canon are wonderful and excellent in every way, but here, in what we have come to refer to as the "Lord's Prayer" are words that have value and importance and meaning beyond anything we can imagine. And as we examine these words over the next few weeks, I'd like for us to ask God to reveal "Himself" to us in every word.

And let's begin by reminding ourselves about a special truth that superintends and defines all of these scriptures in this bible, and that is that these words are not just a "good guide" for us to follow as we live out our daily lives here on this earth. They are that yes, but they are so much, much more.

All of these scriptures are the very breath of God, and if we will only allow the Holy Spirit to explain these words rightly to us, we will be blessed beyond measure. God declared that truth to us in 2 Timothy 3 saying that,

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

May I say this again folks, that these words in this bible are the very breath of God, breathed from His mouth into the minds and hands of these writers like Luke and Matthew and Timothy, piercing into your and my heart and soul, giving us doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness, so that

those of us who know Christ as Savior can be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

For that reason, as you and I read about these thoughts and behaviors of these men mentioned in these scriptures, we must understand that this is God's way of reaching directly into our own souls, revealing to us that we too should be asking the same questions and wanting the same things as did these men and women of old.

And that is especially so as we read here about a disciple of Jesus, desiring to know more about this mysterious matter of prayer. We can know that within these same words, God is also speaking directly into each of our own souls, urging us on to want to know more about the mysteries of prayer, to encourage us, me, you, to wonder and to ask yourself, "Should I be praying more? Is prayer really important? Why is it important? Why does God want me to pray? And what does prayer really accomplish?"

Thankfully, these scriptures don't simply provoke questions, they also give us answers to our questions. And the first answer that God provides is the answer to "why we should pray". And simply put, the answer is, "God is worthy of our prayers!" Listen to those words given in Revelation chapter 4,

"Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!"
¹¹"You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power; (Revelation 4:10-11)

All throughout these scriptures, we are told and reminded over and over again that God is worthy of all the honor and praise and glory that we could ever hope to show towards Him. Beyond all the other reasons for our prayer, beyond all the physical, emotional and spiritual dilemmas that drive us to our knees in prayer, the first reason for prayer is, "God is worthy to receive the honor and glory of our prayer".

I hope to spend more time on this first purpose for prayer later on, perhaps next week, but for now, may I just say, "God is worthy of our prayers".

Perhaps the next best reason for prayer is that prayer enables us to personally and intimately relate with God. Why is that so important? It is important

because, for most Christians, the Christian faith is still at the level of only being a system of good principles and beliefs to live by and not much more.

But prayer brings our Christianity up to where it should be, a one-on-one relationship with an actual person, albeit an awesome and powerful and mysterious person, but a person all the same.

And once our Christianity gets transformed out of being simply a system of good principles, into a relationship with a person, then all manner of other miraculous changes can begin to take place within us. We then can begin to be drawn into an intimate union with the very person of God, a union in which we can begin to know Him and to trust Him and to reach out to Him more and more.

And as we begin to do that, then so much, much more begins to proceed out from that relationship . . . confessions, repentance, pleas, petitions, requests and so many, many more things.

But unfortunately, these words that I have just said and this relationship that I have just mentioned is very difficult for most people, even those who consider themselves to be strong believers.

Relationship means letting down protective barriers, allowing someone else to share a part of our life, dealing with deep and difficult matters of the soul, and that is not easy for many of us. We have secret places within our souls that we don't easily share with others, sometimes not even with ourselves.

And we also have some strong beliefs and behaviors that we like and want to hold onto.

And because prayer opens up those doors that we are not always willing to open, we are often reluctant to pray. We instead busy ourselves with other acceptable substitutes for prayer, substitutes like defaulting back to a Christianity that focuses only upon good Christian principles and behaviors, doing good works and "leaning to our own understanding".

But folks, God does not want you and me to do that. He really does want you and me to get quiet and intimate with Him in prayer. He even tells us that we sometimes ought to seclude ourselves inside a closet, away from every form of

distraction. And hidden away there, give ourselves over to a real and personal and intimate relationship with Him.

And He promises us that if we will allow Him to come in and get intimate with us, then our lives will begin to change in ways we have never known before. He will begin to personally direct the paths and the steps that we take each day.

Those familiar words given in Proverbs 3:5-6,

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart,

And lean not on your own understanding,

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,

And He will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Folks, God really does want you and me to move on into the next step of our faith in Him. And the way to begin that step is through prayer!

Again, for some, perhaps most of us this step has its difficulties. It means that we have to give up the control over ourselves that we have enjoyed all our lives. We will have to give up that thing that God calls "pride", that privilege of always demanding that we have "claim to our right to our self".

Why must we do that? We must do that because that prideful spirit stands as a strong barrier between us and God. With our prideful nature still in place, we prohibit God from the fellowship that is a part of intimate prayer. It is only as we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord that He is able to lift us up.

Thankfully, God knows our frame and He knows that humility does not come easily to our prideful hearts. And so, very often, He will use some of the daily stresses and sufferings of life to bring us to a willingness to call out to Him in prayer.

And yes, oftentimes He will not only allow those things to take place, just as often, He will intentionally orchestrate those incidents.

He knows that we come into this life with an obstinate and self-reliant personality, a personality that is fully convinced that we really don't need anyone else, a personality that wants desperately to do all of the things of life by our own wits and power.

And knowing those things, He providentially arranges the events of our life to bring us to a point of frustration, a point in which we have tried all that we know to do and now need help from a power beyond ourselves.

Thankfully, as believers, you and I know to whom we must cry out to and from whence our help will come. Unfortunately though, that is not so with most all of the other people on this earth, even and especially for some of those that we are closest to in life.

People all around us are confused and helpless to know “to whom” they should cry out to. And unfortunately, they cry out to people and systems and programs that cannot really meet their needs, they cry out to doctors, therapists, medication, governmental programs, and on and on.

Again, thankfully, you and I do know “to whom” we can cry out to for help. It is to God and God alone.

These disciples of Jesus, who were asking Him to teach them to pray had, no doubt, already advanced on past those frustrating times of obstinate resistance, and were now ready to enter into that special relationship that only prayer can bring. And while we can't really know their thoughts at that moment, it seems that in Jesus, they were seeing something take place that had never been a part of their religion before. In Jesus, They were seeing and hearing a very special intimacy taking place.

The religious practices that they were accustomed to did not have intimate relationship at the heart of it. Yes, God was the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of all creation and all of life, but they had been taught to believe that God was also distant, untouchable and unknowable.

But as they observed Jesus and His relationship with God the Father, there was no distance, no separation. His conversation and His prayers spoke of God the Father as being a loving and kind Person, touchable, knowable, loving and intimate, someone that you feared yes, but also someone you could actually get close enough to embrace. And that was a very strange concept to them.

And something within them, no doubt the Holy Spirit, urged them on to want to have that same intimacy.

You can only imagine their thoughts at the time as they would listen to Jesus pray, time and time again addressing God as His "Father". And not only that, He would use very intimate words like, "Abba", meaning "Daddy".

Folks, that was strange and more personal and more intimate than anything they had ever known before. And Jesus was inviting them to also do the same, to themselves also call God "Father". They had never been able to do that before, and they really wanted to. And so, we find them here asking Jesus to teach them to pray.

One last thought before we close. This first matter, the "asking" of Jesus to teach them how to pray, is very significant. The simple truth is, those disciples did not really know what they should think and say and do and hope for in their prayers. And they wanted to be careful to know what to ask for.

But they did need to ask! And so should you and I ask!

If we will take a careful look at most of the prayers we pray, we very often, probably don't pray them rightly.

Yes, most all prayer that comes from a humble and contrite heart is probably acceptable to God, but should we not want to pray as God really wants us to pray.

Again, as we said a moment ago, every part of our relationship with God must begin with humility, and that is especially so with prayer, saying to Him, "God, I want to learn to pray in the way that you want me to pray. And since this is to be a loving and intimate conversation, teach me how to do it."

And folks, as we are willing to do that, "to give up our claim to our right to our self," then God will actually join Himself together with us and will fellowship with us in prayer.

So then, beginning today, let's you and me begin to say as this disciple said to Jesus, "Lord, teach me to pray."

We'll close for now, let's pray.