

## The Lord's Prayer Part3 When You Pray Say

Here in today's passage that I'll read for us in a moment, the disciples, having heard the prayers that John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. And also, and especially, having heard the many prayers that Jesus had prayed, they knew that they were missing out on something very, very important, that there was a real difference in the way that Jesus prayed, different from those they had been hearing all their lives in their synagogues and their temple. And they hungered to know more about how to pray.

And so, we read here in this passage in the Book of Luke chapter 11, these words . . .

<sup>1</sup>Now 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."

<sup>2</sup>So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

<sup>3</sup>Give us day by day our daily bread.

<sup>4</sup>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)

While these words given here in this prayer might seem to be somewhat simple and fundamental, even much like those instructions found in Jesus' parables and analogies, they are not simple at all, but instead are filled to overflowing with deep meaning, words and instructions that can be said and heard by many, but understood by only a few, mysteries that only the Holy Spirit can make clear to the hearts of men.

That truth is expressed for us in the words of 1 Corinthians chapter 2, words that I have shared with you often, and are so appropriate to this circumstance. Listen!

<sup>6</sup> . . . we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup>But

we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.

<sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)

While there are many people who are able to recite these familiar words of the “Lord’s Prayer”, as these words here in 1 Corinthians tell us, it is only those who truly love God and have His Holy Spirit that are able to own them for themselves and able to say them in genuine Spirit and in truth.

So then, as you and I examine these words of this special prayer, let’s ask God’s Holy Spirit to interweave their meaning into our hearts and our souls and then to help us to own them for ourselves.

First, a question that we answered in last week’s message . . . does God always intend for us to pray these exact words in exactly the manner they are given? The answer is, they can be, and should be often, but not always. All through both the Old and the New Testaments, God also gives and demonstrates many other different forms and wording for prayer.

But these words do give us the basic and fundamental guiding principles for most all prayer. And for that reason, we should always use them as an underlying standard and guide for our prayers.

Jesus began here by telling His disciples, “When you pray, say Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name”.

Why should this prayer, or any prayer, begin in this manner? It’s because these words establish the very foundation upon which effectual prayer can be made.

One of the most elemental considerations of prayer is that it should always be made to a person who is in a position of authority to fulfill and to accommodate our prayer. So, to pray to a person for a particular request assumes that that person actually can help us with our need.

It makes no sense to pray otherwise, but unfortunately, many people do, offering up their prayer to whomever they hope can answer them, even to the wind.

To us southern bible-belt Christians, those words may sound odd. But they are not. I have witnessed many, many people in their times of crisis, saying words that sounded hopeful and prayerful, saying their words out loud, but to no one in particular, and especially not saying them to the God that we know and trust. They seem to be just hoping that some “higher power out there” might be listening and help them.

And there are many, many people across our world who believe in other gods, false gods, and they pray to them. Some of them, many throughout the Asian countries, believe that their dead ancestors can intercede to help them, so they pray to them. Our Catholic friends believe that the dead saints can help them. Some people even pray to angels, hoping for their help.

But those of us who believe in the one true God must pray to God and to Him only. He alone has the power and the authority to receive and to answer our prayers. And to pray to anyone else or anything else is an offense to Him.

That is why we find here in these words, the Lord Jesus instructing His disciples, and us, to begin each prayer praying to “God the Father” “who art in Heaven”, with the full knowledge, the full understanding, and the passionate belief that there is but one God and one only, our omnipotent God who resides in the heavens. He and He alone is worthy of our honor and trust, and He alone is able to answer our prayers.

And to begin each prayer in this way also serves another purpose. It serves to continually remind us that we ought often to ponder the great wonder and majesty of God. Because God truly is Almighty, omnipotent in power, who with only a spoken word was able to create everything that exists, the heavens and the earth and all there is within them!

And we know from these scriptures that God has as His residence, the “Heaven of Heavens”. And yes, it is important for us to always keep that truth within our minds. While other false and foreign gods, live within the created world, God our Father is ever and always separate from His creation.

And God, our Father, is ever and always Holy, with His Holy Name to always be “Hallowed” and held in the highest of honor! And He is righteous! And because He is Holy and righteous, He is fully trustworthy to receive all praise, honor and glory. And He is worthy of our faith and our prayers.

And a very important truth to always keep within our minds is that with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Their existence, Their plans and Their Will were and are and will always be absolutely irrespective of anything outside of Them.

Why is that so necessary to understand and to accept. It's because mankind foolishly behaves as if God's existence is in some way connected to or dependent upon us, His creation. That as we change, so should He. But that is simply not so! God is God and His existence, His plans and His will are completely irrespective of us. All that God is and all that God does is according to His divine plan and does not vary or change in any way because of the existence or because of the deeds of men.

I'm reminded of the arguments being given today by our liberal politicians saying that in order to address the current problems and circumstances that take place within our modern day culture, our rules and laws and even the original constitution for our nation should be "fluid" and changeable. And, to some, that sounds like a good idea. But is it?

And unfortunately, for many of those same people, some which are even well-entrenched within the organized church, there is a belief that God and His church should do the same, to do as those liberal politicians do! That God should bend and change according to the needs of our modern day culture.

But thanks be to God, He does not change with the times. And He does not bend or yield to the latest craze within our sinful world. His holiness and His righteousness remain truly holy and righteous. He is unchangeable. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. And we can trust Him to always remain that way.

And let me also address another, somewhat common misconception, and that is that the existence of mankind is in some way a grand experiment that God is conducting, an experiment that requires His Will to ebb and flow, ever changing in order to accommodate mankind's wandering behavior and conduct.

But folks, that is not at all who God is and not at all what He does! Our existence is not an "experiment" at all. God has a plan that He has put into place. And He knew full well everything that would take place long before He breathed

that first breath into the nostrils of Adam. He knew that Adam would sin and fall from grace. And He knew that Adam would not be able to save himself out of the pit of sin that he would fall into. And God also knew that, in the Person of Jesus, He, Himself would need to personally come to earth to die on the cross in order to redeem His fallen children.

Why He would do such a thing, knowing that we would still fail Him at almost every point, we are not able to know. It is one of the mysteries that will probably only be made known when we stand before him in glory.

And thankfully He did not even stop there. Mercifully, He chose to take an even further step, a step that is beyond our comprehension. He chose to humble Himself and to become an intimate and loving Father to us. He told us about that in Romans chapter 8! Listen to these precious words.

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:14-17)

If we have received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, then we are sons of God, true sons. And ladies, please do always remember that when God uses the expression "sons of God" He includes, without any distinction, both men and women, much the same as He includes us men in the group that He calls the "bride" of Christ.

In Christ, you and I really do become true sons of God. Listen also to these precious words given in John chapter 1,

<sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

Folks, we who are in Christ are true sons. And as sons, we can come freely and boldly before His throne of mercy and grace and we can call out His Name, Abba, Father.

And so then, as Jesus gives us this instruction, “When you pray, say “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name”, we can know that we have every right and privilege to address Him as our “Father”.

At another time, as Jesus was preaching His “Sermon on the Mount”, He gave these same instructions on prayer, only more fully. And I would like for us to use those words as I continue through this message. Those words are given to us in Matthew chapter 6. Turn there with me and listen as I read! Jesus said,

<sup>5</sup> And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

<sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

<sup>8</sup> “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. <sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup> Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup> 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 6:5-13)

Again, as we said a moment ago, as we pray, we must confidently remind ourselves that we are truly God’s beloved children, and He really does want to hear and to answer our prayers. And that is best done as we get alone with Him in a private place.

Does that mean that we are not to have corporate prayer such as takes place in church, or family prayers as will take place as we lead our families in private daily devotional worship, or in other group settings? No! To the contrary, as we said in an earlier message, we should freely and openly pray with, and for, other people, especially our family members and friends.

But here in these words, Jesus is instructing His disciples, and us, that some of our ordinary daily prayer time is best done during a private time between us and God.

Why would that be so? The first answer to that question is given here in Jesus' instructions to His disciples. It is so that there can be no ulterior motive or reason for our prayers, like that of trying to impress others who might be watching and listening to us.

But beyond that, God just simply wants to get us alone with Himself, away from the pressures and the distractions of the day and to have some one-on-one time with Him.

It is there, in the quietness of a one-on-one relationship that friendship and familiarity and trust can begin to develop.

In the intimacy of just two people talking, we can say things that we will not otherwise say, loving things, and even some very difficult things, like talking to God about our sin.

So many of the Psalms give us a picture of that kind of intimacy with the Lord. Recall that as David became convicted of his sinful behavior with Bathsheba, God reminded David's heart that all sin is a personal offense against Him, against God. And there in Psalm 51, David cried out, "against thee and thee only have I sinned and done what is evil in thy sight".

Our sin is always first against God and God alone. It is His holiness that is being violated as we commit our sins. And because of that, our repentance must be very personal and intimate between us and Him. And private moments alone with Him give us the uninterrupted time we need to pour out our heart in repentance.

And yes, if we have hurt and offended others with our sins, oftentimes amends with them is also required, but we can do that later. Our repentance before God must come first.

And likewise, most all of the other matters of our daily lives need to be dealt with in our private moments spent alone with God, our thanksgiving, but especially our petitions and our requests.

Why would that be so? Why should our petitions and requests first be a private matter between us and God? It's because the things that we ask God for are sometimes, even often, not in accordance with His will.

Sometimes, we will let our emotions, or even the lusts of our flesh dictate our desires. And because of that we find ourselves asking God to give us things or relationships that we should not have.

Alone and listening to the “still small voice” of God, we can better hear His quiet answer of “no”. And “no” is a very good answer when it is the right one.

And such is the nature of a loving relationship that takes place when a son gets alone with His Father and earnestly engages in a quiet conversation with Him. That is love, real love.

And that is the real nature of real prayer. As Jesus said here in these words, we are to get alone with God and say to Him, “Father”, may we talk for a while?

The time has run short. We'll close for now and, the Lord willing, pick back up again next week.

Listen again to these words given in Matthew chapter 6,

<sup>6</sup> . . . when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

May we pray.