

# “LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!”

## LEARNING TO PRAY FROM THE LORD’S PRAYER



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## “LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!” LEARNING TO PRAY FROM THE LORD’S PRAYER

“What is Prayer? Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.” - Westminster Shorter Catechism #98.

“Prayer is a sacred and appointed means to obtain all the blessings that we want, whether they relate to this life or the life to come. Shall we not know how to use the means God has appointed for our own happiness? Shall so glorious a privilege lie unused through our own neglect?...Who would willingly remain neglectful of attaining an instrument so sweet and successful in advancing religion in its power and pleasures in their own hearts and the hearts of all men round about them?”<sup>1</sup> - Isaac Watts, 1715 A.D.

“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is know water” (Psalm 63:1).

### Introduction

People feel the need to pray. Through prayer we express the basic human longing to lay hold of a world beyond our senses. The disciples of the Lord Jesus certainly felt this need when they pleaded, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). A number of reasons may have prompted this request: they saw the priority Jesus gave to prayer (Mark 1:35); they were moved by his earnestness expressed in prayer; they were mindful of the power unleashed in his prayer. Whatever the reason, they wanted to learn to pray like Jesus.

Their request gave rise to one of the church’s great legacies, the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus said, “This, then, is how you should pray” (Matt. 6:9). The Lord’s Prayer is the classic form of prayer and offers a succinct pattern to follow. It is personal in its approach, simple in its statements, and complete in its parts. It teaches us by

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Watts, *A Guide to Prayer* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), p. 170-175.

example that prayer is not just a medical report or a shopping list; it is a means of grace—a channel through which God brings blessing. It is an activity through which we enter his presence. Of the six petitions in the Lord’s Prayer, the first three reference God and his interests. We seek reverent regard for his name, steady advancement of his kingdom, and obedient respect for his will. The last three address our concerns. We pray for humble dependency, a broken and contrite heart, and personal holiness. The Lord’s Prayer concludes with a note of praise, affirming man’s chief end. This is doxology. We acknowledge the priority of God’s kingdom, power and glory.

The Lord God judged Nebuchadnezzar with madness for his pride. But, when the humiliated king of Babylon regained his senses he prayed, “I... raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored” (Dan. 4:34). Nothing brings order to life, dispels confusion and promotes warm-hearted devotion to God like prayer. Even though its practice may seem more like Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord (Gen. 32:22ff), the basic pattern is still the Lord’s Prayer. As God’s covenant people we are to be marked by the habit of prayer. Theologian J. I. Packer has said, “I believe that prayer is the spiritual measure of men and women in a way that nothing else is, so that how we pray is as important a question as we can ever face.”<sup>2</sup> Let us pause, then, on each petition of the Lord’s Prayer that we may foster devotion and improve our love for and understanding of prayer in all areas of our lives.

### Our Father in Heaven

When we pray, we call on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:29). We bring our hearts and minds to bear on the object of our affections. Eugene H. Peterson has said, “Prayer is a focus upon God

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted in, Derek Thomas, *Praying the Savior’s Way: Let Jesus’ Prayer Reshape Your Prayer Life* (Great Briton: Christian Focus Publication, 2002), p. 16.

whereby all things come into focus.”<sup>3</sup> The manner of prayer is defined by an understanding of the person to whom we pray. To be sure, Jesus is concerned with motives when rebuking the Pharisee’s lengthy and showy discourses (Matt. 6:5-6). Also, he assails the mindless repetitions of the pagans (Matt. 6:7-8). Unlike the prophets of Baal, who ritualistically dance and drone all day to get their god’s attention (1 Kings 18:25-29), Jesus teaches Elijah-like praying that is simple, direct, warm, and conversational. However, its power is in its subject and object, not its activity. Thus we pray, “Our Father in heaven.”

The Lord’s Prayer begins with an invocation. Invocation is how we address God. It is generally short, reverent, and to the point. Throughout the Bible God is addressed in a number of different ways, when the saints approach him in prayer. Abraham prays to “God Most High” (Gen. 14:19). Solomon addresses him as, “God of Israel” (1 Kings 8:23). Elijah invokes the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel” (1 Kings 18:36). Nehemiah calls on the “LORD, God of heaven” (Neh. 1:5). Daniel simply says “O Lord” (Dan. 9:4). Perhaps the most common way of invoking God in the Old Testament is to use his proper name, Yahweh, which appears as “LORD” (all capital letters) in most translations. But there are a variety of ways by which God can be summoned. Prayer is enriched when we make use of this assortment. We can address him by using the title “O King of the nations!” (Rev. 15:3).<sup>4</sup> We can call upon him by one of his attributes like “Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 15:3) or “Holy One” (Rev. 16:5). We can invoke him on the basis of his mighty deeds as “Creator of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:19) and “Redeemer” (Isa. 43:14). But by far, the address most precious to new covenant believers is that which Jesus used most often and taught his disciples to use, “Our Father in heaven.”

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<sup>3</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), p.91.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from the English Standard Version of the Bible. The ESV reading is based on better textual evidence than that found in the NIV which reads, “King of the ages.”

That we may call God, “our Father,” speaks to the intimacy of the covenant relationship we enjoy with the Lord. When the Lord promises that he is our God, and we are his people, he is describing a family bond. Prayer is to be viewed as a privilege of our adoption into his family. This is important because the central message of the Bible teaches how we may call God, “our Father.” In his classic devotional, *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer asks the question, “What is a Christian?” He notes that, “The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Saint John marvels, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1). What a wonderful privilege Christians enjoy in their access to God as Father! The author of Hebrews captures this personal and familial aspect of prayer when he expresses his great assurance in prayer with these words, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

### Hallowed be Your Name

Although prayer is entered through invocation, it is advanced with praise and adoration. If prayer begins with naming God, it continues by exploring the meaning of that name. When we say, “Hallowed be your name,” we are invited to linger on the subject of God’s glory and majesty. This is an aspect of prayer that we often neglect; namely, true prayer begins with and is sustained by adoration of our heavenly Father. Jesus prayed, “Father, glorify your name!” (John 12:28). Here is the peculiar nature of prayer: in addressing God we are to take time to glorify his name.

The first petition calls us to acknowledge and explore the unique character of the God of the Scriptures. First, and foremost, he is holy. He is high and lifted up. He is not to be regarded as

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<sup>5</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 200.

common or addressed in a casual manner. We are not seeking to add to his holiness in any way or to make him more holy than he already is. Rather, we pray that his name might be revered throughout the world, beginning with us.

But, this petition may also be regarded as an example of the way to address the many other attributes and qualities of God’s name and character. God is not only holy. He is also just, good, wise, powerful and so on. The sum of these things is what we mean by his name. Daniel began his great confessional prayer with these words, “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him” (Daniel 9:4). The Psalmist, too, prays in the spirit of this petition, “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1). Another good example is Nehemiah’s prayer, “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands” (Neh. 1:5). Each of these prayers begins by invoking God by name but proceed by praising him for who he is. The point is this: God and the sanctity of his name is the great object of our attention in prayer, not ourselves.

In his classic study, “A Guide to Prayer,” hymnist and author Isaac Watts underscores the importance of this:

“When we consider his nature, we stand afar off from him as creatures from a God, for he is infinitely superior to us. When we speak of his attributes a great acquaintance seems to grow between God and us, while we tell him that we have learned something of his power, his wisdom, his justice and his mercy. But when we proceed to mention the many works of his hands, by which he has tangibly revealed himself to our understanding, we seem to approach yet nearer to God. And when at last we can arise to call him our God, from a sense of his special relation to us in Christ, then we gain the nearest access and are better prepared for the following parts of this worship.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Isaac Watts, *A Guide to Prayer* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), p. 13.

It is necessary that we learn to pray in this way because we need to break the habit of self-absorption and form a new habit of God consumption. This begins by earnestly affirming in his presence why he is so important and why we are so unimportant by comparison. The Psalmist prays this way when he says, “Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness” (Psalm 115:1). Therefore, to pray, “Hallowed be your name,” teaches us to talk less about ourselves and more about God; this is an example of doxology.

We should pray doxologically because it humbles us. It challenges us to think differently about life. Whenever we exalt another before our eyes, we dethrone ourselves and diminish our pride. Unless we are willing to humble ourselves before God, we will never enjoy his grace that lifts us up (James 4:10). The proud will never flee to Christ for forgiveness. Hence, true doxology is evangelistic.

Prayer must acknowledge teachings that are true and affirm the way God’s world really is. The truth of the matter is this: God exists, not for our benefit, but for the glory of his name. Thus through Isaiah, he says, “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols” (Isaiah 42:8). When we pray, “Hallowed be your name,” we affirm that the world belongs to the Lord, and we place ourselves under his blessing and grace.

### Your Kingdom Come

The Lord’s Prayer establishes prayer priorities. When we pray the second petition, “Your kingdom come,” we acknowledge that the rule of God in the world is our present concern. Consequently, the promotion of his glory must be our greatest interest.

At the end of Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he counseled believers to pray this way: “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a

door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should” (Col. 4:2-6). Here the apostle solicited the prayer support of the Colossian Church for opportunity and clarity as he proclaimed the gospel. He wanted the gospel to penetrate hearts and claim lives. In other words he coveted the prospect, “Your kingdom come.”

Earlier in the same letter, however, the apostle acknowledged the present reality of this fallen world. “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and . . . giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:9-13). When we pray, “Your kingdom come,” like Paul, we make two assumptions. First, the dominion or kingdom of darkness rules the hearts of unbelievers. Satan is, “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:2). Second, the kingdom of light has invaded the darkness with the coming of Christ. As John has said, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). Likewise, Paul affirmed that, “having disarmed the powers and authorities, he [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15).

We know that the kingdom of God is certainly present to some extent but not in its completion. Theologians speak of this kingdom as being “already and not yet.” This means the second petition makes two requests. The Westminster Shorter Catechism #102 explains the petition in this way, “In the second petition . . . we pray that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.” Here is a very helpful distinction. As we pray for the demise of the evil one and his influence, we also pray for the advance of the kingdom of grace and a hastening of the kingdom of glory. In other words, we expect the church to grow as we

preach the gospel, and we expect the Lord to come again.

The essence of the second petition directs us to pray for the fundamental mission of the church. As Jesus was consumed with proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom so also we pray for the success of all faithful efforts to advance the cause of Christ in the world. Thus we pray for pastors, teachers and missionaries. We pray with the Psalmist when he says, “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among the peoples. . . . Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns”” (Psalm 96:4, 10). But, when we pray in this way, we quickly realize our own role in the answer to this prayer. Christ will build his church, but he does so through the faithful witness of his people. So, when we pray, “Your kingdom come,” the assumed response is, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8).

There is no outcome more certain than the success of God’s kingdom. Nevertheless, each generation is called upon to engage in battle for its advance. We do not use the weapons of this world, but only those that are capable to demolish spiritual strongholds, and to open blinded minds (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 4:4). One of these weapons is this prayer, “Your kingdom come.” As the kingdom of grace advances, the kingdom of glory draws near. Then we will sing this joyous song, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

### Your Will Be Done

The Lord’s Prayer not only teaches us how to pray, it is a means of spiritual formation. It shapes us in a particular way. We become God centered. We exude reverence by exalting his name. We hone our mission by upholding his kingdom. We learn humility by seeking his will.

The words of this third petition, “Your will be done,” are perhaps the most difficult for us to pray. This is so because it requires two things of us: humble submission to the will of another and

patiently waiting upon the timing of another. Our world values people who make things happen. We honor those who are driven by accomplishment. A strong and determined will is regarded as the measure of character. However, as Christians, we live not for ourselves but for Christ and his kingdom. The Psalmist prays, “I desire to do your will, O my God” (Psalm 40:8). Jesus prayed in Gethsemane shortly before he was crucified, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39). This is not the way of the world.

The will of God is not an easy thing to grasp. However, a verse in Deuteronomy is helpful. “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

The Lord’s “secret will” is bound up in his eternal counsels and decrees. We are not privy to this secret will except to a limited degree as time passes and circumstances unfold. Paul prayed repeatedly that God would remove a certain “thorn” from his flesh only to learn as time passed that the Lord had other purposes for it. He said, “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

God’s “revealed will,” on the other hand, is the Bible. Here God makes known to us his perfect plan of salvation through Christ. But he also shows us the kind of life we as his people are to live in order to bring glory to his name. In short, we are to pursue holiness and practice justice (Jer. 9:23-24). We live as the Lord’s obedient servants. This is a prayer that seeks, not so much to change God’s will, but to align our will with his.

When we pray, “Your will be done,” we express a desire that God would be glorified by producing two things in us. First, that we would patiently wait upon the Lord’s secret will. It takes a humble heart to affirm what the Lord declares, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah

55:8). As the old gospel song says, “Farther along we’ll know all about it, farther along we’ll understand why.” But for now we must live by faith. Second, we are to submit to the Lord’s revealed will. In heaven, the angels obey God perfectly. Here on earth, even God’s people still fall short of his glory. How wondrous that God sent his only begotten Son, not only to give his life for our sin, but also to obey the Father perfectly on our behalf. In other words, our hope is in Jesus alone. Although we rejoice in our salvation from sin and wrath, we pray that God would enable us to grow in obedience to him so that our lives might reflect his heavenly glory more and more.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism (in Modern English) says this with regard to the meaning of the third petition: “We pray that by His grace God would make us have the capability and the will to know, obey, and submit to His will in everything, as the angels do in heaven.” Hymnist Benjamin Schmolck offered fitting words for such a prayer when he wrote, “My Jesus As Thou Wilt” (ca. 1704). The first stanza says,

“My Jesus, as thou wilt! O may thy will be mine; into thy hand of love I would my all resign. Through sorrow, or through joy, conduct me as thine own; and help me still to say, ‘My Lord, thy will be done.’”

### Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

When we use the Lord’s Prayer as a pattern for our prayer life, we become immediately aware that our primary concern is God and his interests. Above all, we should exalt his name, promote his kingdom, and conform to his will. But, our heavenly Father also understands our frailties and fears. Thus he invites to us to petition him regarding the things with which we struggle. The Psalmist reminds us of his love and compassion, “For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14).

That the Lord is the provider of the fundamental things that

sustain life in this world is one of the great teachings of Scripture. James, our Lord’s brother, says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus remarked, “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. . . . Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!” (Luke 12:22-24). Is it any wonder, then, that the Lord grants us the privilege to boldly pray, “Give us today our daily bread?”

Jesus certainly had the miracle of the manna in the wilderness in mind here (cf. Exodus 16). You will recall how the Israelites despaired for their survival in the desert for want of food. Complaining to Moses, they even preferred their former bondage to the prospect of starvation. The Lord, however, was gracious and miraculously provided manna, a flaky substance that came with the morning dew and could be collected and baked into bread. “Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away” (Ex. 16:21). This manna, as it came to be called, had to be gathered daily for it had a very short shelf life.

When we pray, “Give us today our daily bread,” our thoughts hark back to God’s gracious provision for his people in the wilderness. We are reminded that we must trust him daily, for he is faithful to us daily. This prayer presumes a submissive spirit, for it expresses our utter dependence upon his good gifts for survival. It also presumes a thankful heart, for it reaches out with empty hands to receive by faith the Lord’s provision. It is a prayer of trust and contentment in keeping with the words of Proverbs 30:8, “Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.” The following Psalm, often used as a table prayer, beautifully enlarges upon this petition: “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15-16).

We would be amiss, however, if, in praying this petition, we did not also anticipate receiving that Bread which leads to eternal life. Our desires are not ultimately fulfilled through life in this world, but life in the world to come. Jesus said, "It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. . . . I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry" (John 6:32-35). Oh, how we need this Bread daily! Jesus, God's Bread from heaven, sustains us daily. Indeed, as God's true children, we hunger and thirst for righteousness (Cf. Matt 5:6). But we need Jesus daily to fill us. We come to his table, and he feeds us his body and blood through the signs of bread and wine. We come to the Word, and through it he daily nourishes our souls. As hymnist Mary A. Lathbury has written,

"Thou art the Bread of Life, O Lord, to me, thy holy Word the truth that saveth me; give me to eat and live with thee above; teach me to love thy truth, for thou art love."

Hunger is a basic, yet profound and controlling, human impulse. When we pray, "Give us today our daily bread," we recognize that only God, through his Son, can satisfy our deepest longings. "They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. . . . Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things" (Psa. 107:5-9).

### Forgive Us Our Sins

The great English reformer, Thomas Cranmer, gave to the world the Book of Common Prayer. Some of his most well known and oft quoted lines come from a prayer of confession, "We have left undone those things that we ought to have done. And we have done those things that we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." Cranmer, like others, recognized our need for daily

repentance, a lifestyle of contrition, and a life-long rhythm of confession and forgiveness. This is not popular today and is not found widely even in the church. But the Psalmist does say, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer" (Psalm 66:18). The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer builds this habit and consciousness into our lives.

The world today has managed to reduce evil to bad choices due to a lack of opportunity or privilege. Even many in the church see people as basically good, needing only moral encouragement. The Bible, however, insists that evil emerges from within, from a darkened heart, consumed with self and bent against God. This bent is called sin, and it is a universal problem. Our Catechism says that, "Sin is any want [or lack] of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God" (WSC#14). When we pray the Lord's Prayer we are constantly reminded of our most fundamental need--to be both forgiven and forgiving.

Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer says, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (Luke 11:4). Matthew is more specific, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). A debt is something we owe to another. We owe to God, as Creator and Redeemer, our allegiance and obedience. But we fail in both. We fail to pay our debts. In other words, we sin. However, through faith in Christ's atoning work at Calvary, we can be debt free. As a popular gospel chorus says, "He paid a debt he did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay; I needed someone to wash my sin away." When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, Peter reneged, insisting that he needed an entire bath. Jesus replied, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean" (John 13:10). This pictures how Christ liberates us from the penalty of sin once for all, but sin's presence continues with us to the grave. Once we know Christ, we don't need to be saved all over again, but we do need to regularly confess our sinful deeds.

Forgiveness is a distinctive feature of the Christian life. It is a

fundamental covenant promise that says, “I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Heb. 8:12). When we forgive we are Christ-like. The world says such things as: “I don’t get mad; I get even,” or, “I can forgive, but I will never forget.” But Christians are admonished with these words, “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Col. 3:13). The unmerciful servant of Matthew 18:21-35, by his ill treatment of others, put himself in jeopardy. The Lord promised retribution to those who are like minded when he said, “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (Matt. 18:35; Cf. Matt. 6:14-15; John 20:23).

When we pray this prayer, we acknowledge that we are sinners who have offended both God and others. We admit that we justly deserve the Lord’s displeasure. We also acknowledge the promise that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). In Christ, our heavenly Father “has compassion on his children” and does not “repay us according to our iniquities,” but removes them “as far as the east is from the west” (cf. Psalm 103:10-13). We should never be reluctant to flee to God in repentance. Why would we not seek the face of One so willing to forgive? The Psalmist says, “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared” (Psalm 130:3-4). What’s more, we acknowledge the grace of Christ to make us forgiving people. The Shorter Catechism #105 explains the petition in this way, “We pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.”

I recall a story about Corrie ten Boom, who suffered unspeakably in a Nazi concentration camp. She and her sister, motivated by their love for Christ, were captured and confined for hiding Jews during WWII. Her sister died, but Corrie eventually gained her freedom and began telling the world of the Lord’s faithfulness in

the midst of human cruelty. One day while speaking at a church meeting of the atrocities committed against her and others, she testified how the Lord had enabled her to forgive her oppressors. But this had never been tested, at least not until after the meeting. A man came up to her and confessed that he had been one of the guards at her concentration camp. He spoke of coming to faith in Christ and experiencing God’s forgiveness. Now he wanted her forgiveness and held out his hand. Corrie hesitated, and for a moment wondered if she really could forgive the one who had brought so much pain in her life. Then, by God’s grace, she embraced her former tormenter as a brother in Christ.

My friends, who has hurt you? Who has offended you deeply? You must not hold onto it. If, in Christ, God has forgiven you, let him grant you his grace to forgive others as well.

#### Deliver Us From the Evil One

The Lord’s Prayer gives us not only a pattern for prayer, but it lists the priorities for life. One of those priorities is to guard against the subtle encroachment of sin into our lives. The last petition of the Lord’s Prayer is, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” When we pray this petition, we humbly admit to several things. First, we recognize that we live in a world where moral evil is real. Second, we acknowledge our own vulnerability to sin and its enticements. Third, we affirm the reality of a malevolent being whose design is to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10). Peter says of him, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Paul says, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but . . . against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12).

The subject of “spiritual warfare” has received much attention in recent decades. A plethora of popular literature counsels Christians in everything from rebuking Satan to defining territorial demons. Much of these new ideas about spiritual warfare short shrift Christ’s finished work at Calvary and

presume that God's purposes depend ultimately upon our proper use of the right verbal formulas to defeat demonic forces. However, the Lord's Prayer teaches us that we should be taking matters of sin and temptation to our heavenly Father rather than speaking to Satan about them. Our preoccupation should be the glorious gospel of Christ, not the bitter dregs of sin and its tempter.

Indeed, our Lord was tempted by Satan and overcame his thrashing blows by speaking the word of God directly to him (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). The temptation of Christ, however, is not to be regarded as merely an example of how to overcome our own temptation. In fact, we may do exactly as Jesus did and still fall flat on our face. Rather, it serves as proof that Christ defeated Satan in our behalf, in both his spoken word and his atoning work. God's word will make us resilient and resistant. "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). But Christ's death and resurrection as declared in the gospel is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18).

Paul begins his treatment of spiritual warfare with these words, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:10-11). What are the materials of this armor? They comprise security in the gospel, confidence in the Word of God, and fervency in prayer. That is it! There are no formulas, fancy incantations, or preoccupations with Satan. Indeed the lion is real and his roar can be terrifying to the faint of heart, but he is a toothless lion and can do no ultimate harm to those fitted in Christ's armor. Remember what John said, "The one who is in you [Christ] is greater than the one who is in the world [the evil one]" (1 John 4:4).

When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" we acknowledge our attachment by faith to the only one who delivers us. Of this great source we are told, "He too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free

those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:14-15). Martin Luther's great hymn, "Ein' Feste Burg," is a Biblical theology of spiritual warfare, an expansion of this final petition. Listen to his words:

"A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;/our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing./For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;/his craft and power are great; and armed with cruel hate,/on earth is not his equal.

"Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;/were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing./Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he,/Lord Sabaoth is his name, from age to age the same,/and he must win the battle.

"And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,/we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us./The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;/his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;/one little word shall fell him."

### The Kingdom, the Power, the Glory!

The six petitions of the Lord's Prayer are all encompassing. Anything for which we are called upon to pray can be ordered under one of its six headings. The Lord's Prayer concludes with a brief and direct ascription of praise to God or what we have already denominated a doxology. In it we pray, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Some scholars question whether this concluding phrase was part of the original prayer. The reason for this would take far more space than this essay allows. Knowing this should cause us to be more gracious to our friends in church traditions that customarily leave it out. Nevertheless, we can say this: it is clear in the Bible that doxology is a vital part of prayer. Consider the following doxologies as examples: "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for

everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all” (1 Chron. 29:11). Again we read, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17). Simply put, prayer and praise go together as hand and glove. Prayer without praise is like a tree without leaves, like a plant without its bloom. It is my conviction that the doxology in the Lord’s Prayer is fully consistent with the teachings of Scripture and can be prayed with the full confidence that its inclusion is pleasing to God.

People often confuse doxology and benediction. They are not the same things. Benediction literally means “good words.” A benediction is a blessing, usually spoken by an individual appointed to speak in behalf of God to others, as a pastor to a congregation or a father to his children. It is not technically a prayer.

Doxology, on the other hand, literally means “word of glory” or “ascription of praise.” This is prayer because it represents our words spoken to God regarding the majesty of his name or the wonder of his mighty works. Doxologies often appear in Scripture as a brief, concise and spontaneous verbal expression of intense and heartfelt praise. Filled with emotion and conviction, they frequently emerge as a writer is reflecting on a doctrinal truth. A good example is Paul’s famous doxology in Romans 11:33-36, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.” Sometimes they serve as the completion of an extended thought or book as in 2 Peter, “To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Peter 3:18). They are scattered throughout the Bible, often in unexpected places, to remind us that God’s word should lead us to worship.

Doxology is of inestimable value because it teaches us that our lives are to be lived as an offering of praise to God. It reminds us of why we were created in the first place. It’s the continual

exercise of the catechism’s first question, “What is man’s primary purpose [but]...to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” When we focus on God’s kingdom we realize that our accomplishments are really insignificant. When we affirm God’s power, we are humbled by our contrasting weakness. When we lift up God’s glory, we turn the spotlight from ourselves to the One who alone is worthy. We live our lives very differently when we are filled with praise than when it is absent. When we pray that these things are “yours forever,” we acknowledge that we are simply passing through time.

The Lord’s Prayer teaches us that doxology is an appropriate ending to prayer. We begin with invocation and end with praise. The two form bookends that uphold all our prayer needs in between. “Our Father in Heaven” and “Yours . . . is the glory,” serve as one thread binding all our concerns to the Lord of heaven and earth. Like Christ’s humiliation and exaltation, this prayer takes us from heaven’s glory to earth’s uncertainties, and back to heaven again. It is here that prayer finds its highest expression and we find our greatest encouragements. For in doxology we have moved full orbit from our interests to those of him whose glory is above the heavens. It is in doxology that John the Baptist’s vision for life comes to fruition, “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.”

### Why Must We Pray?

David was regarded as a man after God’s own heart. He taught us to pray by giving us the Bible’s book of prayer, the Psalms. Many of these Psalms came from his trying years in the wilderness when he was fleeing for his life from King Saul. Yet, David was a sinner and often failed miserably. Years of hiding must have taken their toll, and David reasoned that he might find peace and security among the wicked Philistines. Samuel writes,

“David thought to himself, ‘One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand’” (1 Sam. 27:1).

David does find a small, temporary measure of peace and security, but at what cost? For the next three chapters (1 Samuel 27-29) David never prays. He never seeks the Lord. Some of Israel’s darkest moments follow. The Philistines don’t trust him. His own men lose confidence in him. Finally, everything comes to a head when his city is sacked and all the women and children are taken captive. Samuel observes, “David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters” (1 Sam. 30:6a). Then, there comes a turning point. The old David is back. Samuel continues, “But David found strength in the LORD his God. . . . David inquired of the LORD” (1 Sam. 30:6b-8). Everything changes!

How often do you behave like David? Do you ever feel yourself fearfully fleeing God’s promises only to embrace the illusion of worldly peace and security? Do you ever reason that the world’s wisdom and resources alone are sufficient to carry you through life? The Bible says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God” (James 1:5). Moses queries, “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?” (Deut. 4:7). Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matt. 7:7). Our Lord invites all who are weary and burdened to come to him and find rest (Matt. 11:28). Prayer is that pathway. It is the avenue to heaven’s gate. It is our access to the throne of grace. Through it we exercise faith and take hold of God’s promises; by it God pours out his blessings. The Psalmist says, “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry” (Psalm 34:15). How could we ever forsake such a privilege? Why would we deny ourselves this fundamental privilege of all citizens of the kingdom of heaven?