

"The Lord's Prayer" (Part 2) - a Longing for the Glory of God

This prayer is a model, a guideline that encompasses the whole concept of prayer. It was not given as something to be merely repeated, but is like a set of "handrails" to teach us how to compose our own prayers.

- This is emphasized in Matthew, where Jesus tells us that it is the "way" or "manner" (i.e., guideline) for us to use.
- Repeating this prayer is *not* wrong, as long as we use it as a *reminder*, not as the *prayer* itself. Repeating it is a good training tool for children.

This prayer shows us that our prayers are to be *God*-centered. It is within this God-centered context, that we interpret our own personal needs. The prayer reflects the order of the two greatest commands (Matthew 22:37-40): first, love for God; second, love for people.

The first three requests in this prayer focus on God - his reputation (name), kingdom and will. These are examined in detail, below. The last three requests focus on people - our needs, forgiveness and protection from evil. These are examined in a separate study.

Our desire to see God's glory revealed (the first three petitions)

"On earth, as it is in heaven"

In heaven, God's glory is seen by all (Revelation 4-5). It is our desire that his glory be seen here on earth, as well. The intent of our prayer is something like this: "Cause your fame and reputation to be spread *across the whole earth, just like it is in heaven!*"

- Note that the reference is to God's glory being revealed "on earth." We are not praying for it to be revealed just "in me" or "in the church"!
- Though this phrase comes after the third request (in Matthew 6:10), it applies to all three of the requests, not just the third.

"Begging" God's to do it

The first part of the prayer focuses on God and his glory. Note that the petitions in this section are not expressions of praise or doxology ("blessed be..."); rather, they are commands ("let it be..." or "cause it to be..."). We are begging *God* to do these things, to *cause* them to happen on earth, the same way they are happening in heaven!

- These are the three most important things to God, so they get our primary attention.

These are not things that *we* accomplish. We are asking God to do them, not volunteering to do them for God.

- Only God can reveal himself (on earth) the way he really is. Two of the ways that he's done this in the past are: 1) he made creation (which reflects his glory); and 2) he made us (his image - Genesis 1:26).
- Because of the influence of sin, we tend to *not* recognize his glory when we see it, until God saves us.

We know that God is the one who will accomplish these requests; but God has ordained that they will be done *in connection with our praying*.

"Cause your name to be central!"

"Hallowed" - being "set apart" as special

Unfortunately, our concept of "set apart" often implies being "set to the side" (perhaps in a special place); but in this passage, it means the opposite. We pray that God's name will be in the *center of attention*.

"Make your name central!"

"Name"

God's name is "weighty" (all-important) - it represents all that God is and does. So don't misuse it as though it were meaningless "fluff"!

- Consider the third commandment: "Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not let anyone who misuses his name go unpunished." (Exodus 20:7) We are misusing God's name any time we use it in a careless or superficial way. Since his name represents everything about him, we are also misusing his name any time we have a distorted perspective of God. (An example related to prayer is: thinking that *God* exists to serve *us*, anytime we ask for something.)
- "Cause your fame, reputation, and person to be the central focus of life!"

It's already this way in heaven; it will be this way on the future earth

In heaven, God's fame, reputation, and person are the central focus, *right now* (as seen in Revelation 4-5).

It will be this way on the future earth (Rev 21-22; also Ezekiel 36:23, which focuses specifically on Israel).

- This accomplishment will happen because of Jesus redemptive victory on the cross. (He bought us - Revelation 5:9!) It won't be merely a display of all-mighty power, but a display of love.

We desire it to be this way even now

We want God to be central. We want God to be seen as he truly is. "Cause your glory to be seen here on earth, the way it is seen in heaven!"

We want his name honored on *all* the earth, not just in the church or home, or in ourselves. And we ask *him* because only *he* can accomplish it.

- Remember that *no* person knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son reveals him (Luke 10:22 and Matthew 11:27). This is the only way people can come to recognize God's glory.

From the perspective of *our* responsibility, what are some of the ways this can be done?

- Corporate worship; private prayer; public presentation of the good news with people repenting; we ourselves repenting and changing the direction of our will (Romans 12:2); etc.

"Cause your kingdom to be central!"

What is meant by "kingdom"? How does it become "central" on earth? This concept has many dimensions. Some of them are:

The future rule of God on earth (which already exists in heaven)

The day is coming in which the throne of God will be located on earth, on the main street of the "New Jerusalem" (Rev 21-22). The glory and power of God will be visible to all. God and the Lamb (Jesus) will

be present, and we will see him with our eyes. All evil will be removed from the earth, along with all pain, suffering and death.

- Pain, suffering and death may seem like a normal part of life; but from the perspective of eternity, it is *abnormal*. It didn't exist at creation; and in the future, it won't exist on the new earth!

We look forward to this future world order and the visible power of God. It's coming is guaranteed, because of Jesus' redemptive victory; but it's still in the *future*.

- This anticipation is expressed by the phrase "Come Lord!" (or Aramaic, "Marana tha"), in 1 Corinthians 16:22; also in a similar expression, in Revelation 22:20.

In the meantime, we don't wait passively for it to come, but pray that his rule and presence will be seen in the world *today*.

- Our *present* relationship with Christ is *future* oriented. So we ask, "Bring the power of the future into the world today!"

The rule of God as the proclamation of God's Word

The very proclamation of the Word of God is an expression or aspect of the kingdom of God. Every time the good news is clearly preached or taught, with people accepting and obeying it, the power of God's kingdom is seen.

- This aspect of God's kingdom - the proclamation of the good news ("gospel") - is *necessary* before the following two expressions of God's kingdom can take place.

The rule of God in the heart (which exists now, in each child of God)

This refers to the internal, moral reign of Christ "within" us (Luke 17:21), and it exists right now. For those who are followers of Jesus, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" are our highest priority (Matthew 6:33).

- God's kingdom and rule must be central in our hearts.

The rule of God demonstrated in history

God's rule is relevant to life. *All* of life is to be placed under God's rule - and this includes the way we interact with others. It is *not* a "private" matter, but must impact all of society, including public policy.

- This has to do with the concept of *social justice*, a theme common to both Old and New Testaments. This is more important than doing religious activities (Isaiah 1:14-17), and was strongly emphasized by Jesus Christ, during his ministry (Luke 4:18).
- If we have a genuine desire for the rule of God on earth in the *future*, we will want to see it (at least in part) *now*. This is one aspect of what it means, when we pray, "Cause your kingdom to be central!"

Application to prayer

We want God's kingdom to be central. In the future, it will be; and at that point, *all* other powers in heaven and on earth (including all kingdoms and nations) will be overthrown!

- It's like praying, "*May your kingdom overthrow all other kingdoms!*"

We want the power of the future to be here today!

- We want God's kingdom to rule over our own lives, as we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33).
- We want God's rule to be expanded throughout the earth; we want people to abandon the kingdom of darkness and come into the kingdom of light.

"Cause your will to be central!"

This is another way of asking for God's kingdom to come, and is not present in the Luke account. It's inclusion in the Matthew passage focuses on the *moral will of God*, such as expressed in the Ten Commandments and in the various moral teachings given in the Sermon on the Mount.

- It is our desire that God's moral law be obeyed throughout the earth.

Do you delight in God's moral law, or is it a burden to you?

- The moral law is addressed to us in two ways: *externally*, it is written in Scripture; *internally*, it is written on the hearts of God's children.
- If God's law is written on your heart, you will delight in it - even though you will still have to deal with temptations and will often need forgiveness - as seen later in this prayer.
- If God's law is *not* written on your heart, obeying it will probably seem like a burden to you. (Trying to live a genuine Christian life with a pagan heart can be one of the hardest thing in the world to do!) In this case, it probably means your heart is still unchanged, and you are still spiritually dead in your sin.

How do the first three petitions affect the way we pray?

Remember the purpose of prayer

The purpose of our prayer is the centrality of God. We pray in harmony with God's person and work (which his "name" represents). We ask God to bring the power of the future (his kingdom and will) into the present.

Praying to God is *not* presenting to him a huge wish list of goods, services and demands! God doesn't *owe* us safety, health, good weather, etc., even though he often graciously gives them to us.

How do we know if our prayer request is honoring to God?

A good way to evaluate our prayer is to ask ourselves this question: "If our request is *not* granted, will it cause God's name to be defamed? Will it cause his kingdom to fail, or his will not to be done?" Some examples:

- Why might you pray for someone to repent? If he *does* repent, God's name, fame and reputation "on earth" will grow in this present age.
- Why do you want grandma to be healed? It's true that you might miss her if she dies. But it is even more important to realize that, if God chooses to heal her, his power will be seen and his reputation will grow on the earth.
- How about the prayer, "Don't let it rain on my picnic!" Will God's name, fame and reputation be hurt if it *does* rain? There might be legitimate times for such a prayer; but we tend to focus on the convenience it will have for *us*, instead of any benefit for God and his kingdom.

At times, direct statements in Scripture will show us if our prayer is legitimate. Some examples:

- We know it is good to pray for those in authority, because Scripture *commands* us to do so (1 Timothy 2:1-2). It would be sin to *not* pray for them.
- Praying with the wrong motives is sin, and when we do this, we should not expect God to pay attention to us (James 4:3).