

## The Model Prayer – Our Father which art in Heaven

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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### **The Model Prayer** **(a.k.a. The Lord's Prayer)** (Matthew 6:9-13 – KJV)



Our Father which art in Heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy Will be done in earth,  
As it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day, our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil:  
For Thine is the kingdom,  
And the power, and the glory, forever.  
Amen.



Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Purpose: Jesus gave His disciples the key to entering into a relationship with God. The key is prayer. We can be renewed if we allow this model prayer to form and shape our thought life. We begin with *“Our Father, which art in Heaven.”*

When it comes to prayer, maybe we pray like these children:

Angela, age 8 prayed: Dear God: This is my prayer. Could you please give my brother some brains? So far he doesn't have any.



Hank, age 7 prayed: Dear Lord: Thank you for the nice day today. You even fooled the TV weather man.

Louis, a nine-year-old said: Dear God: Please help me in school. I need help in spelling, adding, history, geography and writing. I don't need help in anything else.

David, age 7 had a problem that he thought God could help him with. Dear God: I need a raise in my allowance. Could you have one of your angels tell my father. Thank you.

Eight-year-old Diane prayed: Dear God: I am saying my prayers for me and my brother, Billy, because Billy is six months old and he can't do anything but sleep and wet his diapers.

When Jesus prayed, the disciples took notice. The disciples of Jesus stood on the deck of a ship in the midst of a raging sea and watched as Jesus commanded the winds and waves to be still. Amazingly, the water and winds obeyed the command of *"Peace, be still."*



Those that followed Jesus watched as He spoke to a paralyzed man to take up his pallet and walk. They saw 5000 people fed on the side of a mountain with only five loaves of bread and two fish, with 12 baskets remaining after all had eaten their fill. They saw blind people regain their sight, lepers healed, mentally deranged people restored to a healthy mind – all healed from a word spoken or the slight touch of His hand.

They heard a man speak as no one ever spoke. They knew this was the one Israel had been waiting for – the Messiah – the Christ.

That awe changed to fearful responsibility when Jesus said to them, *"As my Father has sent me, so I send you."* I am sure they were wondering, how can I do all that Jesus has done? But Jesus knew they would go and do just as He has done. *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he*



*will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."* (John 14:12)

Could it be true that the power Jesus demonstrated could be theirs also? Would Jesus teach the disciples the key or the secret to that power? The disciples discovered Jesus' power came in the connection to God through prayer. They came to him in Luke 11:1 and said, *"Lord, teach us to pray."* They knew that the secret was found through prayer.



In response to that, Jesus gave them the prayer we have called the "Lord's Prayer." I really believe it should be called the "Model Prayer." Jesus could never pray, *"Father forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."* Jesus never sinned and didn't need to pray that. But his disciples needed that part of the prayer. So, for you and me, it is a model for prayer.

Charles Allen in the book, *God's Psychiatry*, gives us some insight as to the importance of this prayer. This prayer can be said in about 15 seconds. If said very slowly, maybe 30 seconds. Today, all around the world millions of people can recite this prayer. But very few ever really learn to pray it. Yes, we can say it, but have we learned to pray it?

The power in this prayer does not come in the saying it, it comes in praying it. These words form the framework, or the scaffolding, upon which the power of this prayer can be built. We are reminded to have our minds transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:2) When our mind begins to be renewed by this prayer, we can be transformed.

As we think as Christ thinks, we can have the power of Christ dwelling in us.

In Shakespeare's "Hamlet" the king spoke how miserably he failed in prayer. Maybe you feel as if you fail miserably in prayer.



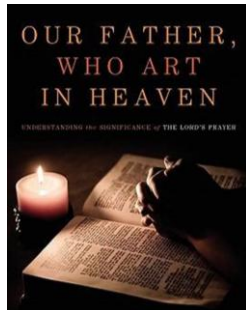
"My words fly up; my thoughts remain below;  
Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

Maybe our prayers fail because our thoughts are so earthly connected. May our time of studying this prayer transform our thoughts heavenward.

Before we begin, let us pray.

### **Our Father Which Art in Heaven<sup>1</sup>**

Jesus tells us to pray. If we only had these six words and none other, we would have enough. The other sixty words of this prayer only help explain this first phrase. If you really learn to pray this – *Our Father which art in Heaven* – then we don't need to go any further.



The word "Father" is a definition of God. As I mentioned two weeks ago, this is a revolutionary concept that God – who created the world, who establishes nations and kings, can be considered "*Our Father*." In the Old Testament this is a foreign idea that we can have a personal relationship with God as our Father. Jesus is inviting us into that kind of close connection with God as family.

When I was at Kennedy Home as a house parent in 1987, we were told to avoid using the word "Father" in connection with our conversations about God. Most children there had awful role models for fathers. Some fathers beat their wives or girlfriends frequently. Some children were abused by their father. Some were alcoholics or drug addicts. Earthly fathers were a poor role model for a Heavenly Father. But God is a perfect Father.

The second half of this phrase tells us, "*which art in heaven*." This is given to us not as a way of locating Heaven, or telling us where God lives. We often get caught up in the idea Heaven is a far, far away place. We sing songs that reinforce that idea. In the song the "*Old Rugged Cross*" it says, "*He will call me some day to that home far away*." But that is not what Jesus is trying to instill in us. Heaven is as near as the air you breath.

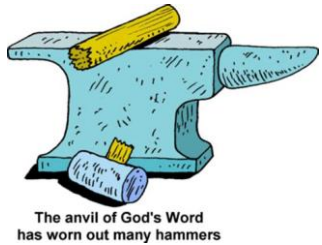
I would suggest that "*which art in Heaven*" is really a way of saying Heaven is synonymous with perfection. You could say "Our perfect Father" and mean essentially the same thing.

### **The Sovereignty of God**

To be able to say, "Our Father" means that you are in a relationship with God. To say "Father" means that you are a son or daughter. To say "Our Father" means that you are in a relationship that implies authority and allegiance to. That also means that Father has a right to command over His sons and daughters.



To be in a right relationship with God as Father means you surrender your will to His will. It is not important what you want to do, it is important what God wants to do through you. God is sovereign over all of His creation. We are made in His image and He has the authority over us. To fail to recognize God's sovereignty over our lives is to fail at the most important point in life.



Charles Allen relates a story of a Waldensian church that has a picture of an anvil and a number of broken hammers lying beside it. The motto of the picture says,

“Hammer away, ye hostile hands!  
Your hammers break; God’s anvil stands.”

Until you reach the point in life of saying “Father” to God, you will only be hammering away in life defeated by the sovereignty of God.

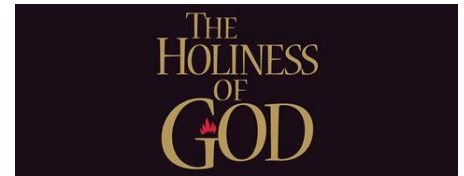
Sometimes God is portrayed as a judging, vengeful God. Yes God does judge everyone. Yes the scripture says, “*Vengeance is mine says the Lord.*” (Hebrews 10:30) This aspect of God is reserved for those that have selfishly rejected Him.

The overarching characteristic of God is not judgment, but rather love. God is a compassionate God desiring that none perish but all come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is why forgiveness is so freely given and so easily received. Forgiveness can be obtained by believing on the Lord Jesus



Christ. Not through our works can our broken relationship be restored, but through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Paul said in Romans, “*For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*” (Romans 8:15) We can call upon God as our Father!

## The Holiness of God



When I consider God as our Heavenly Father, I think of the holiness of God. The hymn we often sing, “*Holy, Holy, Holy,*” reminds of the perfect holiness of God. When Isaiah caught a glimpse of God, he was convicted of his sinfulness and imperfection compared to God. He cried out, “*Woe, is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.*” (Isaiah 6:5) He fell on the ground repentant.

When we pray, we often close our eyes. I believe I do it so the things around me can't distract me from giving my full attention to my thoughts being heaven focused. Maybe we should pray with our eyes open so we can see others around us as brothers and sisters of the same family of God.

Maybe we need new eyes to see people around us as children of the king in need of a helping hand. What about the poor, the starving, the illiterate, those that are on the beds of affliction? We need to pray with our eyes closed, focused on God – but also with our eyes open to the needs around us.



There is a longing within all of us to belong. Years ago, the program *Cheers* theme song reminded us of that longing to belong:



Making your way in the world today  
takes everything you've got.  
Taking a break from all your worries  
sure would help a lot.  
Wouldn't you like to get away?  
Sometimes you want to go  
Where everybody knows your name,  
and they're always glad you came.  
You wanna be where you can see,  
our troubles are all the same  
You wanna be where everybody knows Your name.

Maybe when we say, “*Our Father*” it is about removing barriers to belonging to God and to one another. If God is our Father, we will begin removing the barriers that separate us from one another – seeing each person as a child of God.

### Knowing God through Faith, Hope, and Love



As Charles Allen notes, this first phrase identifies Father God by **faith**. It implies we accept God by faith and believe all the Bible teaches about Him through faith.

The phrase “*in Heaven*” includes all of our **hopes**. Hope is a word that describes something we are longing for and striving to obtain. In Heaven all things are made perfect.

We are not perfect, but we should be striving to be that. Matthew 5:48 says, “*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect.*” That should be our goal in life to be transformed and strive to live perfectly. Now I have not arrived, and I suspect you haven’t either. But we have that hope, or that goal, set before us.



That longing forward is built within us. We are never really satisfied with the status quo. If we have a car, we want a bigger one. If we have a house, we want a larger one.

If we have money in the bank, we want more. Once we complete one project we are planning the next one. That innate longing for the next should also apply to our walk with God.

Those that are His, have a longing in their heart for our Heavenly home. There is a groaning in our earthly tents to be clothed eternally in Heaven. (2 Cor. 5:1-8) Our hope is Heaven.

The phrase “Our” is an inclusive word implying **love**. Our faith is not solitary. Our faith involves a relationship with God and others.

Ernest Crosby in the poem “*The Search*” tells of the connection between us and others.

No one could tell me where my soul might be;  
I sought for God, but God eluded me;  
I sought my brother out and found all three.



“Our Father” brings out the three greatest themes of the Gospel – Faith, Hope, and Love. We are reminded the greatest of these is love.



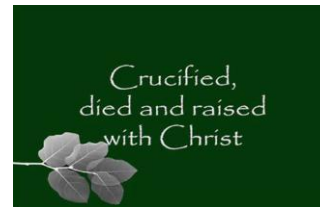
This phrase, “*Our Father which art in Heaven*” could revolutionize our lives if we allowed the framework of this prayer to mold and shape our thought life. It would lead us to

surrender our lives to His service. It would lead us to abandon our possessions and serve humanity. It would change our life’s orientation and cause us to seek and save the lost around the world. It would allow us to be able to say as Jesus said, “*Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit.*” (Luke 23:46)

Are we ready to surrender our life over to God? The Apostle Paul was able to say, “*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (I Cor. 15:55-57)



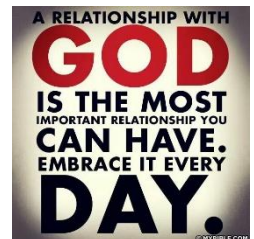
This verse of scripture is often read at a funeral. I have stood by the grave with many families to let them know about the hope we have in Jesus Christ. As we are standing there, it would appear the grave has won yet another person. But I want the family to know it was not defeat, it was the beginning of a victorious home-going. For a believer in Jesus Christ, their victory was won through Jesus Christ! There was not defeat in death. Through Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, death was swallowed up in victory!



When Christ died on Calvary, our sins were crucified there. When Christ rose from the dead, all those that are in Christ have their life bound up in His resurrection.

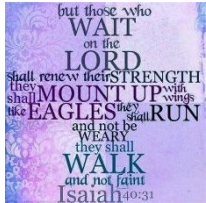
Christ’s death crucified our sins – Christ’s resurrection gave us victory over our last enemy death! Now with confidence we can say, those that have died in the Lord are with the Lord.

To pray, “*Our Father, which art in Heaven*” is not the opening sentence of a long list of “I want” or “I need.” Rather it should be the doorway in which God can begin to move into our lives. Spending time with God in prayer like this requires time. Jesus would often go off by Himself to pray. It was that connection with God that was the source of His power. At times, Jesus would go off by Himself and pray all night. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus took forty days away to pray in the wilderness. There in the quietness He would talk with His Father.



Norman Vincent Peale tells the story of his first visit to the Grand Canyon. While there, he asked a person that has spent a lot of time there at the canyon which trip he should take to see the most possible of the canyon. The person suggested that he shouldn’t take any of the trips. Instead he suggested he come out early in the morning and take a seat on the rim and sit there and watch the morning pass into noontime. From noontime watch into the evening

as the colors of the canyon change. He suggested he slip away and get a quick bite to eat and return in the evening and watch the purple twilight over the vast canyon. He said if one runs around, he merely wears himself out and misses the beauty and greatness of it all.



We are so busy with life, running here and running there, that we miss the beauty of life and the greatness of God by not being still and listening. Isaiah 40:31 says, *“They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.”* David said in Psalm 46:10, *“Be still, and know that I am God.”*

H. G. Wells once said, “Until a man has found God he begins at no beginning and works to no end.”

You cannot begin to pray until your mind is filled with thoughts of God. Maybe that is why prayer at the close of a church service is so meaningful to people. Our minds get filled with the things of God that only then can we really pray to God.

Elizabeth Cheney wrote a poem that challenges us to place our trust and care with God and God alone.

“Said the Robin to the Sparrow,  
“I should really like to know  
Why these anxious human beings,  
rush around and worry so.”



“Said the Sparrow to the Robin,  
‘Friend, I think it must be  
That they have no Heavenly Father,  
such as cares for you and me.’”



Maybe if you examine your life honestly, you will find you have been guilty of running here and there without any sense of accomplishment or purpose. Maybe you have accomplished a lot or done a lot you intended to do, but you have left the most important relationship out – your relationship with God. I want to invite you to invite you this week to allow the framework of this prayer – *Our Father which art in Heaven* – to so permeate your every moment that you recapture that relationship once again.

## LET US PRAY

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Outline from *God's Psychiatry* by Charles Allen

