

Good Monday Morning to my dear family and friends. It is time to get into the Word of God and spend time with Him in prayer. Today is the first of two Devotionals developed from what are accustomed to call "The Lord's Prayer," but what I choose to call "The Believer's Prayer." Jesus taught us to pray "in this manner."

## AS HE TAUGHT US TO PRAY – Part One

A Devotional prepared by Dr. Robert L. Morris

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"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. ... when you pray, ... pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 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. Therefore, do not be like them, for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray ..." (Matthew 6:5a, 6a – 8; NKJV)

In many churches the Pastoral Prayer concludes with an invitation to "Let us pray together the prayer our Lord taught us to pray." Unfortunately, some pastors say: "Let us repeat the Prayer our Lord taught us, saying..." And so the congregation joins together and repeats or prays Matthew 6:9-13. More often than not, usually the Authorized, or King James Version is used, since that is how we probably learned it in our childhood days.

"Our Father Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on 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."

In some Church fellowships the phrase "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" is changed to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Further, some groups omit the final statement: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever."

In Churches considered "conservative," the language of the King James Version is usually used in praying that model prayer. It is usually referred to as "The Believers' Prayer." This is because Jesus taught it to His Disciples ... those who "believed" in Him. Refer to it as you desire. But it is for us, the Believers' Prayer. We must never let it become a ritual of vain repetitions, for this is a matter against which Jesus warned in Matthew 6:7. We are to "pray" this prayer, not "repeat" this prayer! Let it be so! Please join me, as we review that prayer and from it learn some valuable lessons about what prayer really should be about! Then, let us pray it with meaning from the depths of our hearts. More importantly, we must let it become the basis or model for how we put prayer into our daily lives.

Is this "Believers' Prayer" something brand new to the followers of Jesus? I think not. On what basis? The entire Bible ... the Holy Scriptures ... have one single Author ... and about 40 "pen-men" who were used by that one Author to inscribe what He wanted. This being my firm belief, I want to note that Jesus, is the Eternal, "One-of-a-kind," Incarnate Son of God, in full equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit, all three Persons making the One God of Eternity. He is the Divine Author of all Holy Scripture, written through, and so frequently reflecting the heart, mind, and character of the humans He used to inscribe His Word for us. Therefore, to quote from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, is not only appropriate, but it is logical as well. When Jesus gave the instructions noted above, we know as "The Believers' Prayer," or called "The Lord's Prayer," I am totally convinced that He was bringing into the Christian era that which He had already fully endorsed through King David who inscribed the following:

“Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty. For all that is in heaven and on earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank You and praise Your glorious name.” (1 Chronicles 29:10b-13; NKJV)

When I read David’s prayer, I can easily envision our Lord Jesus Christ taking that magnificent Old Testament prayer, and fashioning its depth of meaning into the words He gave to His disciples. The correlation between these two Scriptural prayers is amazing. Therefore, what God gave to the Old Testament believers, He also gave to all New Testament believers. And that, my dear friends, means it is for us! Join me in examining this great prayer that our Lord taught us to pray. For this study or Devotional, the “preacher” in me” divides “The Disciples’ Prayer” or as I prefer, “The Believers’ Prayer” into two parts, Acknowledging God and Asking God. Through this study I will be using The New International Version (TNIV) unless otherwise indicated.

Part 1. Acknowledging God – “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Authorized, or King James Version begins the prayer this way: “Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name.” Many years ago, when some of us were children in Sunday School, we memorized this prayer. In some of our public schools, this prayer was a part of the morning ritual. I recall reading about one teacher who asked her 5th grade students to “write” the Lord’s Prayer. The students had been reciting that prayer since 1st grade. One student wrote: “Our Father Richard in heaven.” Apparently “which art” sounded like “Richard” to him. Another student wrote: “Our Father which art in heaven, Harold be Thy name.” Maybe he knew a man named “Harold.” There are probably many interpretative expressions in the minds of children who recite or pray this great prayer. We probably observe a bit of humor in those responses, but one of the glaring needs is to gain understanding of what Jesus really meant by “The Believers’ Prayer.” Let’s look into the prayer language itself, and from that discover what it means to “Acknowledge God” in our praying.

The idea of God being “Father,” is found in the Old Testament in its metaphorical sense. King David wrote: “Sing to God, sing in praise of His name, extol Him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before Him – His name is the LORD. A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling.” (Psalm 68:4, 5; TNIV)

David also wrote: “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on His children.” (Psalm 103:13; TNIV)

The Prophet Hosea comes a little closer to the New Testament concept when he wrote: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” (Hosea 11:1; TNIV)

The Jewish people in the Old Testament spoke of God as “Father” only in the sense that He is the Origin of all things. Even the Apostle Paul, after establishing himself as a “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” wrote: “For us, there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” (1 Corinthians 8:6; TNIV) It is in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus introduced the concept of God being “our Father.” In that Sermon He taught us to pray and gave to us “The Believers’ Prayer.” In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus refers to God as “Father” or “Father in heaven” or “Heavenly Father” sixteen times. In addressing God, we are acknowledging God for who He is. In this initial approach to God are three vital elements of prayer.

(1) There is Adoration. We pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” (Matthew 6:9; TNIV) The word for “hallowed” is ἀγιασθήτω – hagiasthétō, an aorist, passive, imperative form of the verb “to

make holy.” This is a prayer. It is not a command. When we pray “Hallowed be Your name,” we are really praying “Let Your name be made known to all people as the revelation of WHO You truly and eternally are – the Holy One!”

(2) There is Anticipation. We also pray: “Your kingdom come, ...” (Matthew 6:10a; TNIV) Some Bible scholars suggest that Jesus is teaching us to pray for the coming of the new heavens and the new earth. I find that while there “may” be some truth in that interpretation, at the time of the Sermon on the Mount, and now for us, it is a prayer for the inward, internal reign of God in the hearts of His people. It is therefore a “now” prayer. It seems Biblically accurate to pray that Jesus will be the King of kings and Lord of lords in the hearts of His people. With the Beloved Disciple John, we do look for the return of our Lord Jesus. But to pray for that apart from asking for God’s gracious and sovereign rule in our hearts makes the prayer unreal.

(3) There is Affirmation. We pray: “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10b; TNIV) At this point in “The Believers’ Prayer,” we need to know what is meant by “the will of God.” So, what is the will of God? Perhaps as believers we are accustomed to asking God for “His will for my life.” That is not what Jesus meant. We are not taught to pray “as in heaven, so also in my heart and life.” We need to remember that this model, or “Believers’ Prayer” is a part of what we call “the Sermon on the Mount.” Remember also, that “context” is extremely vital in Bible study. This part of the prayer in reality is, “Let Your will become reality on earth, even as it is reality in heaven.” At this point in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had just finished teaching about the following:

- (a) The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). The gifts of God’s gracious (blessed) love.
- (b) The Metaphors (Matthew 5:13-14). The lessons about salt and light, as we share God’s love.
- (c) The Requirements (Matthew 5:15-20). God’s standards for holy living.
- (d) The Commands (Matthew 5:21-48). The instructions for holy living.

Here, in His carefully stated words, we learn what Jesus meant by “His will.” God loves us so much that He accepts us just as we are (stated in the Beatitudes.) But He loves so much that He does not leave us that way. He carefully instructs us in the way of holy living (found in the Commands.) Therefore, for this we do not pray “May we do Your will,” but rather, “Let Your will become reality, as it is in heaven, so also on the earth.” In other words, we pray “May everything You have taught us or will teach us become reality in the context of our living on this planet.”

Albert Simpson Reitz has given to us a beautifully challenging hymn, one that we should personally and collectively sing. I close this part of our two-part Devotional on “The Believers’ Prayer” with it. Part 2 of this Devotional on "The Believers' Prayer" will be posted next week.

#### TEACH ME TO PRAY, LORD

1. Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;  
This is my heart-cry day unto day;  
I long to know Thy will and Thy way;  
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.

#### CHORUS after each verse

Living in Thee, Lord, and Thou in me,  
Constant abiding, this is my plea;  
Grant me Thy power, boundless and free,  
Power with men and power with Thee.

2. Power in prayer, Lord, power in prayer!  
Here 'mid earth's sin and sorrow and care,  
Men lost and dying, souls in despair'  
O give me power, power in prayer!

3. My weakened will, Lord, Thou canst renew;  
My sinful nature Thou canst make new;  
Fill me just now with power anew;  
Power to pray and power to do!

4. Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;  
Thou art my pattern day unto day;  
Thou art my surety, now and for aye;  
Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray.