

The Sermon on the Mount

"Our Father In Heaven" (Matthew 6:9-13)

INTRODUCTION:

- I. It should come as no surprise to anyone that we live in a selfish, indulgent, materialistic society. Unfortunately, it has also had its impact on some of the basic beliefs of those claiming to be Christians.
 - A. Nowhere is this seen MORE than in the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" that has been popularized in our day.
 1. It's the concept of "NAME IT AND CLAIM IT" – or, the belief that God will give His children the desires of their heart as long as we ASK, and as long as we CLAIM IT IN FAITH before we actually receive the blessing.
 2. Although the BIBLE teaches that GOD is SOVEREIGN and MAN is His SERVANT, the "Prosperity Gospel" implies just the OPPOSITE.
 3. It teaches that we have the RIGHT, and that we SHOULD, make demands on God to bless us MATERIALLY – to provide US with

the BEST this world has to offer because we are the children of a KING!

a. It's the belief that the child of a king is blessed with material riches beyond the average person's WILDEST IMAGINATION.

b. It's the belief that God stands ready to bless our lives with material WEALTH as long as we CLAIM IT in the name of Jesus Christ.

4. The simple truth is that the so-called "Prosperity Gospel" perverts the PURPOSE of prayer, and uses the Lord's name in VAIN.

5. It's unbiblical, ungodly, and NOT taught ANYWHERE in the Scriptures.

B. When we think of prayer as simply a way of getting the things WE want, or feel WE need – whether material, physical OR even spiritual – we're DISTORTING the true purpose of prayer.

1. Instead, Biblical prayer is ALWAYS meant to GLORIFY GOD, and is PRIMARILY concerned with who God IS, what He WANTS, and how He can be GLORIFIED.

2. To believe that God is like some genie – waiting for us to rub His bottle through prayer so that He can grant our every desire – clearly flies in the face of Biblical teaching.

- C. Even though we find a number of examples where Old Testament saints pleaded with God to take them out of difficult and trying circumstances, they always sought to GLORIFY God and to follow HIS will in their prayers.
1. For example, when Jonah was inside the belly of a great fish, he prayed:
 - a. **Jonah 2:7, 9** – *"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple. . . . But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."*
 - b. When Jonah had a good reason to plead with God for deliverance from the belly of the fish, he simply praised the character of God.
 2. Daniel was often in dangerous situations because of his role within the pagan Babylonian society. In his prayer over Judah's captivity, he prayed:
 - a. **Daniel 9:4-5** – *"O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and*

committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments..."

- b. Did you notice how Daniel began his prayer by affirming the nature and character of God?
3. Jeremiah lived the majority of his life frustrated and weeping over the spiritual condition of his people. When he COULD have become preoccupied with his OWN painful circumstances, instead he would praise and glorify the name of God and His wonderful works.
- a. **Jeremiah 32:17-19** – *"Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You. You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them — the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts. You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings."*

4. Those Old Testament saints clearly understood that prayer was meant to glorify God – to recognize His rightful place – and to recognize that THEIR WILL needed to conform with HIS.
- D. And that brings us to a statement of Jesus in Matthew chapter 6 as He was teaching His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount.
1. Jesus said:
 - a. **Matthew 6:9** – *"In this manner, therefore, pray:"*
 2. In fewer than seventy words Jesus goes on to teach the most important lesson ever taught on prayer.
 - a. Of course, no one but God the Son could condense every conceivable element of true prayer into such a brief and simple form – a form that even a young child can understand.
 3. Not only is this a lesson ON prayer, Jesus ALSO presented this prayer as an example of what prayers should NOT be – the ritualistic, unacceptable prayers that were common among the religious leaders of His day.
 4. After warning His disciples of the perversions that had crept into Jewish prayer life, Jesus provides them with a divine pattern that ALL believers can follow, and by which we can approach the throne of God in a way that is pleasing to Him.

5. **Matthew 6:9-13** – *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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 do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

BODY:

- I. As we mentioned in our last lesson from The Sermon on the Mount, this prayer is often called the "Lord's Prayer," but in reality, it would be more appropriate to call it the "Disciples' Prayer."
 - A. This prayer was NEVER intended to be memorized SOLELY for the purpose of mechanically repeating it in some mindless ritual.
 1. When Jesus said, *"in this manner, therefore, pray,"* He didn't mean for His disciples to pray with these exact words at all.
 2. Instead, He wanted to give them a pattern for the STRUCTURE of their prayers, so that their prayers wouldn't end up being like the useless, repetitious prayers so common in His day.
 3. This doesn't mean you SHOULD'N'T memorize it. We memorize MANY important passages of Scripture.

- a. In fact, MEMORIZING it and MEDITATING on its truths can actually help us formulate our OWN thoughts when we pray.
 4. So, think of this prayer as a MODEL we can use to give us direction when we praise and glorify the majesty of God, and when we bring our petitions before His throne.
- II. The way this wonderful model prayer begins is by proclaiming the special relationship we have with the God of heaven.
- A. The words Jesus used in this model prayer say SO MUCH about our relationship with God.
1. For example, the words "*Our Father*" presents a father-child relationship.
 2. The words, "*hallowed be Your name,*" emphasizes the deity-worshiper relationship we have with Jehovah.
 3. "*Your kingdom come,*" shows the sovereign-subject relationship we have with God.
 4. "*Your will be done,*" reveals the master-servant relationship.
 5. "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" emphasized the gracious benefactor-beneficiary relationship.
 6. The words, "forgive us our debts," reveals the Savior-sinner relationship.

7. And finally, "*do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,*" speaks of the loving Shepherd-sheep relationship we have with God.
- B. This prayer also defines the proper attitude and spirit we should have when we think of our relationship with God.
1. The words "*Our Father,*" reflects a special family relationship.
 2. "*Hallowed be Your name,*" shows deep reverence.
 3. "*Your kingdom come,*" speaks of our loyalty to the sovereign rule of God.
 4. "*Your will be done,*" suggests our willingness to submit.
 5. "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" shows our dependence.
 6. "*Forgive us our debts,*" speaks of our genuine repentance.
 7. "*Do not lead us into temptation,*" reveals our trust in God.
 8. "*Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever,*" speaks of triumph, sovereign rule, exultation, and hope.
- C. In fact, if we take this prayer as it was meant to be – a model for prayer – then we discover that it reveals the threefold purpose of prayer.
1. To recognize the holiness of God's name.
 2. To pray for the spiritual kingdom of God – the Lord's church.
 3. And to pray for basic material and spiritual needs.

- II. But, no matter how perfect the PATTERN of our prayers may be, we need to always remember that if our HEARTS are not right, then our prayers won't accomplish what we're hoping they will accomplish.
 - A. So, how do we make sure we have the right attitude of heart when we pray? The Lord answers that question by showing us that when we pray, our focus must ALWAYS be on God.
 - 1. That's why THIS prayer is so helpful. Every phrase and petition focuses on God – on His person, His attributes, and His works.
 - 2. When we focus on God and not on ourselves, we keep our prayers from being hypocritical and mechanical.
 - 3. The kind of prayers the Lord wants are prayers that come from a humble heart, and that show absolute dependence on God.
 - 4. And so, the more we think about the true character of God, and all His many and wonderful attributes, the more we will truly seek to glorify Him in our prayers.

- III. Over the next several weeks we're going to take a close look at various components of this prayer. But for now, I want us to focus on the FIRST thought Jesus presents in this model prayer – the wonderful fact that God is our FATHER IN HEAVEN.

- A. The word “Father” is probably one of the most common terms we use in prayer – and rightly so, because that’s the pattern Jesus set.
1. Prayers should ALWAYS begin with the recognition that God is our Father – the One Who gave us life and Who lives, cares for, provides for, and protects us.
 2. However, the fact that God is OUR Father means that only those who are DISCIPLES OF CHRIST – those who are BELIEVERS in Christ – are in God’s family. There are MANY passages, but here are just a couple:
 - a. **Romans 8:14-17** – *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*
 - b. **1 John 3:1-3** – *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has*

not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

B. Spiritually, unbelievers have ANOTHER father.

1. **John 8:44** – In His most severe condemnation of the Jewish leaders who opposed Him, Jesus said, *“You are of your father, the devil.”*
2. John (**3rd John**) characterizes two families – the children of God, and the children of the devil. The children of God do not continue to sin, but the children of the devil live their lives as they please.
3. The apostle Paul also made a distinction between the children of light and the children of darkness. (**Ephesians 5:8**)
4. Peter says that only those who believe and have been made *“partakers of the divine nature”* (**2 Peter 1:4**) are children of God.

IV. Sadly, the Jewish perspective of God in the days of Jesus had lost its sense of wonder and intimacy.

A. There were so many wonderful truths about God’s nature, His character and His attributes that were revealed in the Old Testament

Scriptures. Unfortunately, they were either IGNORED, or simply FORGOTTEN.

1. Many Old Testament passages speak of God as “Father.” And, to most Jews, they thought of God as the Father of the nation of Israel – not as a Father in a close, intimate way.
 2. And yet, there are several Old Testament passages that speak of a compassionate, loving, tender, merciful God with Whom we can enjoy great intimacy.
 - a. **Psalm 68:5** – God is a *“father to the fatherless, defender of widows.”*
 - b. **Psalm 103:13** – He has great compassion: *“As a father pities (has compassion on) his children, so the Lord pities (has compassion on) those who fear Him.”*
 - c. **Jeremiah 31:9** – He’s a Father who gives His children wisdom and instruction (a guiding God), *“They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel.”*
- B. Therefore, when Jesus arrived on the scene, He REINTRODUCED His Jewish audience to God as a loving, merciful Father to those who know, love, and obey Him.

1. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His disciples that the Father ALWAYS takes care of the needs of His children.
 - a. **Matthew 7:7-11** – *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"*
 - b. In these wonderful verses, Jesus REAFFIRMED what the Scriptures had ALWAYS taught – namely, that God is the Father in heaven to those who TRUST in Him, and who OBEY His will.
 - c. And, because He IS our Father in heaven, He will ALWAYS respond to our basic needs.

- V. So, when we begin our prayers with the words, "Our Father," do we REALLY understand what those words actually imply? I can think of at least SIX things.

- A. First, these words dispel our fears.
1. The gospel of Christ was preached all throughout a pagan world given over to false religions with false gods invented by men. And typically, these gods were characterized as vengeful and jealous, and their worshippers were required to take desperate measures to appease them – including offering their own children as sacrifices.
 2. But when we come to truly know the God of heaven as a Father Who loves and cares for us, all our fears are dispelled.
 3. There is no need to be afraid of this God – as long as we are truly doing His will.
- B. The words “Our Father” also give us hope.
1. At a time when the world is falling apart in the midst of hostility and wickedness, knowing that God is our Father, and that He’ll take care of our future, gives us GREAT hope.
 2. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:11, if an earthly father will go to any length to help and protect his children, how much more will our Heavenly Father love, protect, and help us.

- C. The words “Our Father” also take away our loneliness.
1. Even if we are rejected and abandoned by family, friends, or even fellow Christians, we know that our Heavenly Father will NEVER leave us. (Hebrews 13:5)
 2. God’s presence is all we will ever need to drive away loneliness. He will never LEAVE us nor FORSAKE us.
- D. These words also help us to defeat selfishness.
1. If you take a closer look at this model prayer, you’ll notice that Jesus never ONCE used a SINGULAR PRONOUN.
 2. The prayer begins with, “OUR Father” because we are ALL brothers and sisters in the household of God.
 3. While it’s certainly NOT wrong to pray for our own, individual needs, we need to make certain that our prayers ALSO include the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 4. When we pray for OTHERS, we’re following the Biblical examples left by JESUS, PAUL, PETER, and other New Testament saints who did the same thing in THEIR prayers.
- E. The words “Our Father” also help us focus on God’s blessings.
1. **Ephesians 1:3** – The apostle Paul writes, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”*

2. Whatever we seek, whether it's peace, fellowship, knowledge, victory, or boldness, God has an abundant supply in the heavenly places, for those who are IN Christ.
 3. All we need to do is ask, seek and knock.
- F. Finally, the words "Our Father" demand our obedience.
1. If Jesus, as God's TRUE Son, came down from heaven not to do His own will but His Father's (John 6:38), how much more are we, as ADOPTED children, to do only His will.
 2. And, if children are commanded to obey their EARTHLY fathers, how much more are WE expected to obey our Father in HEAVEN?

CONCLUSION:

- I. When you begin your prayers by calling on "Our Father in heaven," you're indicating your eagerness to go to Him as a child, knowing that He truly loves you and cares for you.
 - A. When you do that, you'll find that God is eager to hear you.
 1. And if your request is in your best interest, and will serve to further magnify His power and glory, don't be surprised when God grants your request.

B. Our Father in heaven delights in those who choose to follow the path of righteousness.

1. **Psalm 37:23-28** – *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever...”*

II. Can YOU truly pray the words, “Our Father in heaven?”

A. Is God TRULY your Father in heaven?

1. Have you’ve trusted in His saving grace, and obeyed the Lord’s command to repent, and be baptized for the remission of your sins?
2. And if you’ve done that, have you CONTINUED to show your deep love and appreciation for BEING your Father in heaven by your continued faithfulness to Him and to His Word?