

In This Manner, Therefore, Pray

Matthew 6:9-10

Introduction – “*Everything we do in the Christian life is easier than prayer.*” – Lloyd-Jones. Jesus gave his disciples warnings on hypocrisy in prayer and instructions on how to pray (vv. 5-8). This is followed by instructions on what to pray. We should pray in this particular fashion, which means that someone should be able to see the similarity between our prayers and this recorded prayer. There is much to glean and apply in our prayer lives, individually and corporately. Some initial considerations:

Is this a prayer to be used verbatim? – Yes. Jesus says to pray in this manner. And in Luke 11:1-2, it is recorded that Jesus said, “When you pray, say...”. In addition, the terms ‘our’ and ‘us’ seem to imply that this prayer is to be spoken corporately. However, whether in the homes or in the church service, we must avoid the mindless misuse of this prayer. That was the point of vv. 5-8. Remember Col 4:2, “...be vigilant”, i.e. ‘stay awake, stay alert’.

Where is “In Jesus’ Name”? – We pray this way because Christ taught it explicitly in other places, but implicitly here. How are we able to address God as ‘Father’ except through the Lord Jesus Christ, dressed in His righteousness alone.

Our Father in heaven – God is the creator of all (Acts 17:28), but He is our Father only by our covenant relationship through our union with Christ (John 20:17), and by regeneration (Gal 4:6, 2 Pet 1:4). It implies we have been made the recipients of His love, and emphasizes this over the truth of our legal and judicial relationship (1 John 3:1). We come to One who loves us as He loves His only begotten Son (John 17:22-23), and we come to a Father who promises never to leave or forsake His children (John 10:28-29). Therefore, this is also an exclusive prayer and term – for believers only.

Our Father in heaven – We need to destroy the sin of autonomous individualism, and what better way than in this first little word. We are a covenant people, a holy nation. We are one body, and you are not an only child, and so we pray with and for one another.

Our Father in heaven – This emphasizes the great Creator/creature chasm between us and our Father. He is very close and very far. While there is intimacy in our relationship, it is not without reverence and fear, for He is omnipotent, omniscient, immutable..... And so we rejoice, with trembling (Psalm 2:11).

Hallowed be Your name – Notice the grammar carefully. This is not a declaration, it is an imperative/petition – “Let Your name be hallowed”. Notice also, as the first petition it should be the first in our prayers as well. What’s in His name, Jehovah? The Jews would not even speak it. The catechism teaches us that it is ‘all that whereby He maketh Himself known’. A name defines the character and traits of a person. This petition implies that we are giving ourselves to the study of God. Are you? We are praying that in us and in others, God’s name would be glorified. This is not a light request – that all atheism, false religions, idolatry, profaneness would be put down by God to His glory. This is a prayer of world conquest. And so it continues...

Your kingdom come – We are praying for the extension of the manifestation of Christ’s saving reign and the destruction of His enemies (Dan 2:44ff). His kingdom is the place of salvation (Mark 10:25f, Col 1:13f). The scriptures teach that the kingdom has come, is coming and will come.

For ourselves, we are praying that we would more and more be loyal subjects to our King. We are praying for sanctification, and for a zeal for His glory in everything.

For the world, we are praying that the preaching of the gospel would be efficacious (1 Cor 2, Rom 10). In this we pray for a mighty increase in numbers and influence, as well as preservation and protection against her enemies. And to this end, we also learn the purpose of imprecatory psalms. We are in a real war like no other wars. Unbelief will be rolled over and destroyed.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven – We continue to focus first on God’s glory from many angles. This is not referring to God’s decretive will which always comes to pass (Eph 1:11, Dan 4:35), except in submission we are to pray ‘not my will, but Yours be done’, as Jesus prayed. We are praying His precept-ive will be done; all the world, ourselves included, would obey God’s commands from the heart. We are praying Ez 36:27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them”. Communion with God is kept in obedience to His commands. And for the Christian only, Jesus says, “My yoke is easy, my burden is light”.

And for the world, we are praying Micah 4:1-3. The Prince of Peace will have His victory. We are praying that families, cultures, and nations would be re-formed according to the will of God.

Conclusion – The goal is worldwide obedience – unapologetically. In light of Chapter 5, where we are instructed to be salt and light, we are not praying that God would be tolerated. We are praying that the worship, submission, and adoration of God would be expressed in everything everywhere, starting with ourselves and the church, but certainly to the entire world. Why would God instruct us to pray in such a way?

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