



## Message from the Scriptures

***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 and ever. Amen***

In many Churches on a Sunday morning a part of our worship includes praying, "The Lord's Prayer." Many feel that there is something missing in the prayer time if this prayer is not in the service, but do we know what we are praying or are we merely repeating words because it is the accepted thing to do? Some children were taught the bedtime prayer saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my Soul to keep", without really knowing anything about their soul! Sometimes these memorized prayers lose their meaning because we have said them so many times. What does it mean to us personally to pray the Lord's prayer? Does it make a difference in our lives or are we merely going through the motions because it is the "accepted" thing to do?

One evening, a little girl was saying bedtime prayers with her mother. "Dear Harold, please bless Mother and Daddy and all my friends," she prayed. "Wait a minute," interrupted her Mother. "Who's Harold?" "That's God's name," was the answer. "Who told you that was God's name?" asked the mother. "I learned it in Sunday school, Mummy. Our Father, who art in heaven, Harold be Thy name." As I began to think about this prayer, I found some things in it that should make a difference in our lives. Today I would like us to focus on some of these things.

The prayer is divided into two main sections. The first section shows us how to focus on God our Father totally to lead us into a time surrounded by God Himself: His name, His Kingdom and His will.

The second section now that we have come under his name and seek his kingdom bring us to asking for our needs and our deliverance: we ask for our daily bread, we ask for forgiveness and we ask to be led away from temptation, to be delivered us from evil.

So how does the Lord's Prayer apply to our lives today?

1. Our Father: in the beginning of this prayer we see that God is not only majestic and holy but also Personal and Loving. The prayer Our Father brings about a brightness and warmth over the entire prayer. He is both fully divine over the entire universe, but He is present and near to us--a personal God. We must not include one without the other. We need a vast and powerful God who is in control of things, but we also need to know that He is only a prayer away and is close to us as individuals. We say, "Our" Father. Not the father of someone else but OURS. He is different from earthly fathers. He is our Heavenly father.

The fatherhood of God is not a central theme in the Old Testament. Not until Jesus gave the prayer to his Disciples, to address God as OUR FATHER did anyone think of God as a personal, loving Father. Jesus addressed God as His father and taught His disciples to do the same. People were more used to emphasizing God's supremacy. In this prayer Jesus is emphasizing that God is personal. There is a relationship that exists between God and us.

In this verse we are also told who to pray to--Our Father, not to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. But to God the Father. There are other scriptures that tell us to pray in Jesus Name But we start out Our FATHER because this is how our Lord taught us to pray.

We know where God is when we pray. Our Father which art in Heaven. He is majestic, rules over all things, yet is as near to us as our prayer. A God like this should be able to handle any size prayer we pray, don't you think? But we limit Him. We make Him too small. We ask, "Can God?" We should be declaring, "God Can!"

2. Hallowed Be (Holy) Thy Name: This is a statement of praise and a commitment to honour God's Holy Name. We do this by using it respectfully. If we use it lightly, we are forgetting God's holiness. What about carelessly using God's name in slang? Many people get into a habit of saying, "Oh, God" or "God" or in taking God's name in vain. Exodus 20:7 says something about deliberately taking God's name in vain. "Do not use my name for evil purposes; for I, the Lord your God, will punish anyone who misuses my name." (GNB) God's name is a reflection of who He is. That God be treated as a holy God and that His name should not be despised by the thoughts and conduct of those who have been created in His image is important in this part of the prayer.

3. Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be Done: We are not resigning ourselves to fate here--it is not "Que Sera, Sera" whatever will be will be. We are specifically asking for God's will to be done in our lives and in the world. This applies to our personal lives because scripture says that the "kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). We can ask for this because in Luke 12:32 it tells us "...it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is the personal relationship of Christ in our lives. Many people are writing off the world as a hopeless cause and just waiting to get out of this world and for Jesus to come and take them out of it. But God is not finished here yet. Even though we live here in a world of failure, He is not writing it off yet. He still has more work to do. He still has work for us to do here in His church. We are to "seize the opportunities until He comes." Not just "exist."

What if God takes us seriously in this prayer and works out His will and purpose in our life? Do we want this to happen? What if His will for our lives is different from our will? We are praying every time we say this prayer, "Lord I want YOUR will to be done in my life. I want you to set up your kingdom in my personal life." If we are asking Him to work out His will and purpose in our lives, we can trust Him to do so but if we want to say it we must mean it and just now repeat it.

We pray that God's will may be ultimately done on the earth in the same way He included this in the prayer, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." He is working in our world today and in our lives despite the evil that goes on all around us--the terrorism, the sinfulness. He is still at work. He can and will continue to work out His will and purpose in our lives no matter what things happen in the world, or in the church, or anywhere else. We keep our eyes upon the Lord, keep faithful to Him no matter what anyone else does

4. Our Daily Bread: Give us this day our daily bread. Bread is a symbol that all of our physical needs be met--not just food. It goes beyond food to cover other daily needs. We are acknowledging God as the one who will fill us up and provide for us. We must trust God DAILY to provide what we need. We can be confident that He is a big enough God to take care of us. We have God who is our Source of all good things. We are asking Him to supply us with what we need today. He can and will do the same tomorrow. We don't just trust God in crises situations--but we trust him daily.

5. Forgive Us our debts as we forgive our debtors. The word debt means sin, the things we have done wrong. But we also ask God to help us forgive those who have done wrong to us. If we refuse to forgive others, God will refuse to forgive us. When we refuse, we are denying that we are sinners in need of God's forgiveness. It is easy to ask God's forgiveness, but it is difficult to grant it to others. When we ask God to forgive us, we should ask ourselves, "Have I forgiven other people who wronged me?" An important thing is to have an attitude that makes forgiveness possible. Perhaps a willingness for the Lord to make us willing to forgive.

Too often forgiveness is too cheap and easy. People say, "Forgive me" and then continue to do the same thing over and over. Or they say too quickly to a person, "I forgive you" and let the person off the hook too quickly that the person will hurt them over and over again. Too often people say, "Forgive me" and then go right back to doing the same thing again. When we ask for forgiveness it should be with the desire that we would not hurt the person again if we can help it. Forgiveness, whether asking for it or giving it to someone else should not be easy.

I knew someone who always was quick to tell me, "If you don't forgive, you'll go to hell. This is the worst thing we can tell someone. It's like putting an elastoplast on a decaying wound. Sometimes it doesn't happen overnight. It must be worked through, talked about, and the anger and pain felt. Then forgiveness and healing begin to take place.

6. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. A little girl repeated, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us some e-mail" Sometimes our emails bring with its great temptations!! God doesn't deliberately lead us into temptation. We bring temptation into our own lives with our own choices. Here we are asking God to help us to recognize temptation and to give us the strength to overcome it. To walk around it. To recognize the dangers for what they are.

So here we are saying, "God watch out for us, so we don't fall into the traps that Satan sets for us." We are asking for deliverance from Satan who brings evil into the world. Christians sometimes struggle with temptation because it is clever, and we don't even know a lot of times what is happening to us. Let us ask God to open our eyes--to alert us--to put up a red flag. Have you ever wondered why some people fall into one trap after another? Perhaps they are not sensitive to this one prayer--we need to ask God for help before we get into a mess and then be sensitive and obedient to His leading once He shows us. May we recognize our own helplessness and know that Jesus has the power to deliver us.

DOXOLOGY: For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever, Amen. The doxology was added and used by the early church in around the 2nd century. This prayer ends honouring God for everything, giving everything back to him. We begin with God's Holy name and we end in God's Glory. It is the model for every prayer. Jesus gave us a guide that is everlasting and helps us to focus on God for all that we need. Praise be to our Lord for a such a gift, to lead us into a unique and loving place with our Heavenly Father

Blessings

Ann

