

## PRAYER

### *Catechist.*

My dear *children*, know well that you are not able to do these things of yourself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him, without his grace and help; which you must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer. Let me hear, therefore, if you can say the Lord’s Prayer.

### *Answer.*

**O**UR 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 trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.

*Catechist.* What do you desire of God in this prayer?

*Answer.* I desire my Lord God our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness,

To send his grace unto me, and to all people:  
That we may worship him, and serve him,  
and obey him as we ought to do:

And I pray unto God, that he will send us all things that are needful both for our souls and bodies:

That he will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins, and help us to forgive others:

And that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers both of soul and body; and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from everlasting death.

And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I say, Amen, So be it.

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**Last week, we finished discussion of the law.** We looked at the 10 Commandments, and The Law of Christ. And we saw that “law” alone can be a heavy burden; living the way that God intends us to live is difficult at best, impossible if perfection is the goal. And we saw that there was a huge amount of **duty** and **responsibility** in being a Christian. And then we read: ***My dear children, know well that you are not able to do these things of yourself, nor to walk in the Commandments of God, and to serve him, without his grace and help; which you must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer. Let me hear, therefore, if you can say the Lord’s Prayer.***

And so, we need **God’s gracious help** to live out our duties and responsibilities as Christians. So, what is it? What is God’s Gracious Help?

**Three important terms: Justice, mercy and grace.**

**Justice** = If you were to do something wrong (hit your sister), justice means that you get *punished* (grounded from your phone for a week). Why? Because, justice demands a direct consequence (punishment) for your action (hitting your sister) *that brings you back into alignment, or righteousness.*

**Mercy** = Mercy is you do something wrong (hit your sister), and I sit you down, and say, “You hit your sister, and you deserve justice (punishment), but I have decided not to punish you (show you mercy).”

**Grace** = Grace is when you do something wrong (hit your sister), and you deserve justice (punishment), but not only do you receive no punishment (mercy), but your parent sits you down, and says, “You hit your sister, which deserves punishment, but you are not being punished, and here’s a jelly filled donut.”

**I know, it’s kind of a silly example, but the point is to illustrate grace. Grace is not just mercy where God says, I will not punish you, but it is in the midst of that sin, God rewards you as if you did something good.**

Grace is sometimes defined in the church as unmerited favor, **or getting what you don’t deserve.** So, the idea is, you and I are not able to obey the law of God, or the laws of Jesus,

and because of that we deserve to be punished, but, because we have turned to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, God gives us his gracious help, rather than punishment, or simple mercy. And that grace is the only way we have a chance of walking in the ways of Jesus. In fact, we will never fully do so, and will always need to rely on the grace of God, every day.

### **How we get into God's grace? The Cross of Jesus Christ.**

If you decide not to rely on God's grace, and instead rely on yourself, things will not go well in the Christian life. **In fact, the decision to rely on self and not on grace is called idolatry (and is forbidden in the 10 commandments).** An idol is anything that takes the place of God in our lives, including ourselves. If we look to anything or anyone to make us right before God, or to get us what we need in life, then this is an idol.

**So, how do you get grace? Well, you can't just go get it. If you could, you would have to work for it, and grace is a free gift from God – not something we earn, or can "go get".**

And this can be a problem for us, because we are used to taking care of ourselves, and being rewarded for hard work. We are not used to *unmerited favor*.

**Now, the catechism says we need to ask for it, in prayer, and especially through the Lord's Prayer.** Hey, wait a minute. You said it was free, and not something we "go get"! Correct, but, God decided prayer was important, and even though he knows you need the help already, and gives you grace as a gift, *he wants us to ask*. And this is part of prayer. Asking. **We are not trying to please him by praying (God will be happy if I pray, and then help me). We are simply relating to him, communicating with him like we would another human being.**

Now, imagine you are in a relationship with another person (parent, friend), and you stop communicating with them – how will the relationship go? It doesn't go well. Why? Because by definition, relationship and communication are the same. You can't have a relationship without communication.

**Any healthy relationship involves communication.** Now, prayer is not the only way we communicate with God – we do so in worship, through scripture, and as we serve Him in the world. ***But prayer is the baseline.***

**Prayer is not magic.** There is a lot of Christian magic in the world today – people thinking prayer is like a magic spell, where I say certain words, and if I say them, then the Spirit has to act – does what I want. And in these cases, there is some sort of sacrifice involved (if you pray and fast, then...God will do this or that). (Like The Prayer of Jabez – say it for 30 days and God will give you what you want.) In other words, you must pray this or that, or in this way or that way or God won't hear you and do anything.

All of this assumes you are not in relationship with God, or that God has to somehow be appeased before he will answer your prayers. **That is called paganism, and the** idea here is that somehow there is a better way to pray to get what you need from God – this thinking is magic, and this kind of magic is forbidden by God.

**So why is it that we are encouraged to say particular prayers, like the Lord's prayer?**

Well, no prayer is better than another, or more powerful, but the way we pray shapes the way we think and what we believe. **What we pray is what we believe.** This is why our worship, and songs, and so on at church are important too. **Why, because our prayer and worship shapes our belief.**

**So, the Bible gives us some prayers to pray to help shape what we believe about God. And one of them is the Lord's Prayer.**

### **The LORD's Prayer**

*“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: “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 also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt 6:7–13 ESV)*

*“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.” (Luke 11:1–4 ESV)*

**This is Jesus's prayer, and it is liturgical, and given to a community (not individuals).**

Teach us to pray – **US. OUR** Father... Of course, we can also use it as individuals in our personal devotional life.

1. **Our Father.** Jesus called God his Father, and when we become Christians, we are adopted into God's family, as his children, and like Jesus call him Father. All Christians are adopted, chosen, equal.

["But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." \(Gal 3:25–26 ESV\)](#)

2. **Who art in heaven.** Heaven means a lot in the Bible. Can mean spiritual realm, throne room of God, sky and air. So, what do we mean? God in the holiest place, in the spiritual realm, or the "place where God dwells".
3. **Hallowed by thy name.** Like in the 10 commandments – use his name correctly not in vain. God is holy, so his name is holy and to be respected, and not taken for granted. What is implied here is: "may I and we as a church do this." May the totality of who we are take your name seriously. So, may we not take for granted the totality of who God is. ***This will transform how we think of God.***
4. **Thy kingdom come thy will be done.** This is easy for us to ignore, because we live in democracy, not a monarchy. We pray for God's kingdom to come and it implies the kingdom of the world (Rome in Jesus day, global capitalism perhaps in our case, or American power, western empire, Canadian Government) *is not the sole authority*, and that we are praying for another kingdom to come, and take over. It is the greater kingdom, with a greater king, and rule. And it flies in the face of the kingdom of the world. And, **when God's kingdom comes, what he desires to take place will take place.** (So, now, as we wait for the Lord's return, our part is to have his kingdom come in our lives, church community and our world around us.)
5. **On Earth as in heaven.** Means having God's will and ways to regain control of our world. where God is and dwells.

**Now, imagine your prayer life is focused on these above things.** What would that do to you? Well, it would hopefully form who you are in your heart and soul into a servant of Christ, not just someone who expects things from God in prayer. And, it forms you into a person who accepts his grace, and lives it out. It is an ego diminishing prayer: less of me/us, and more of God.

- 6. Give us this day our daily bread:** What is subversive here is that it implies that other things, and people don't give us our daily bread. It is not work, or friends, or spouse, or parents or the government, and not even my own ability – **but it is God who gives it.** So, there is something here that forms our hearts into people who entrust our lives to God, and build a sense of dependence on Him.

**Daily:** *This is the common translation. In Greek, actually means super substantial – provides complete sustenance in every way – so this is the bread of God that gives us everything we need to be sustained in every single way.*

- 7. Forgive us our trespass as we forgive those who trespass against us.** Here (sin, debts, trespass) we ask God to forgive us for what we have taken what is not ours; for how we trespassed God's law (sin). **And it is conditional** – in the same way we forgive others, we ask God to forgive us. In other words, "God show me mercy, and do it in the same way I show it to others." As Christians we are obligated to have mercy and show it.
- 8. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.** This is debated. God does not tempt anyone. What is meant? Our best understanding is that God would assist us in temptation, and help us to pass the test (Israel in the desert, Jesus in the wilderness). Steer us clear of what he knows we would fall for.
- 9. Deliver us from evil:** Note, here it is highly likely this is *the evil one* not just "evil". So, it is the devil...spiritual evil, and personal evil. In the Bible evil is relational, like love, and so we are talking about enemies (physical and spiritual). Evil beings and people.
- 10. For thine is kingdom, power, and glory:** Subversive. Who has all the power in the world? Yahweh. Not earthly rulers, or the devil.

**All of this reminds us that God is in control.** We can't forgive our own sins. We can't provide for ourselves. We are weak and succumb to temptation. We need God's gracious help. So pray it. Think about what it says, and do it slowly.

### **Personal Prayer Time**

**Through prayer we ask for the grace of God, and ask for God's help to live out the commands, and life in Christ.** Below is a way we can pray, one of the best ways of prayer that can help form your inner heart. It is not intercessory (praying for others), but it is about entering into relationship with God in the context of his word.

**The below form of prayer is called *Lectio Divina* (divine or holy reading)**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio\\_Divina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina)

**It is a form of prayer practiced for thousands of years, based on scripture, and molded by Benedictine monks. It is simple, but not easy.**

**Basically, it is a four-step form of prayer.** And it requires a commitment to relationship with God. In other words, it assumes there is a God and we have a relationship with him, and that God's best way of speaking to you is in and through the Bible. So it is evangelical in that it is Biblical, Charismatic in that it assumes God is there, with you, speaking to you, and Catholic in that it assumes God will want to speak in an ordered way.

**First, we have to prepare.** *Start with the scriptures* because the Bible is the word of God and best source of hearing God. You can use daily bible readings, or whatever passage. Do it **alone**. Need TV off, phone off, be alone, sit with God. (Don't lie down in bed, or you will go to sleep.)

- 1. Read and listen to the word of God. Pick your passage of scripture, and read it.**  
When you read the bible, read it out loud, so your brain is active, mouth is active, and ears active. Listen carefully to it. **As you do this, something will jump out at you.**  
When this happens, you are done. This is the phrase to focus on.

**Example:** *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matt 23:37 ESV)*

2. **Meditate.** Now we meditate on it. Reflecting on the word of God and ponder the phrase in your head. What does it mean? What does it mean to me? (I desired to gather you?) What if I was in the story, what would I have heard at that point? What if I was a Pharisee, a disciple? What did Jesus mean? Think and reflect on it.
3. **Pray It.** Third part is to pray. Praying the word of God in your heart. You have the phrase, thought about it, and form it into prayer and make it personal. (*God, will you do that to me, gather me as a hen her chicks, or God how often have I run from you as you tried to gather me, or how often I have caused others not to be gathered*). Pray it aloud to God. Or ask him to make the truth real in your heart. You are now into the point of your heart being involved, and speaking what he said to you, back to him. **Sometimes, you will have an emotional experience.**
4. **Contemplation.** This is the final stage. This is the place, too deep for words. What happens here is that you have gone through the prayers, read word, heard, thought, prayed it back to God, and now you are done. *My quiet time is over.* That is the moment where you are asked to sit still and not do anything. It's when you are done...and want to go do other stuff...don't. Just stay there, and wait. Let God take the truth deeper, and speak to your heart.