

THE LORD'S PRAYER Chapter 9 The Doxology

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Transcript

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Chapter 9

The Doxology

"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"

Matthew 6:13

This model for Divine worshipers concludes with a doxology or ascription of praise to the One addressed, evidencing the completeness of the prayer. Christ here taught His disciples not only to ask for the things needful to them, but to ascribe unto God that which is properly His. Thanksgiving and praise are an essential part of prayer. Particularly should this be borne in mind in all public worship, for the adoration of God is His express due. Surely if we ask God to bless us, the least we can do is to bless Him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!" exclaims Paul (Eph. 1:3). To pronounce blessing upon God is but the echo and reflex of His grace toward us. Devout praise, as the expression of elevated spiritual affections, is the proper language of the soul in communion with God. The perfections of this prayer as a whole and the wondrous fullness of each clause and word in it are not perceived by a rapid and careless glance, but become apparent only by a reverent pondering. This doxology may be considered in at least a threefold way: (1) as an expression of holy and joyful praise; (2) as a plea and argument to enforce the petitions; and (3) as a confirmation and declaration of confidence that the prayer will be heard. In this prayer our Lord gives us the quintessence of true prayer. In the Spirit-indited prayers of the Old Testament Psalter, prayer and praise are continually joined together. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gives the following authoritative instruction: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6). All the prayers of eminent saints, recorded in the Bible, are intermingled with the adoration of Him who inhabits the praises of Israel (Ps. 22:3). In this pattern prayer, God is made both the Alpha and the Omega. It opens by addressing Him as our Father in heaven; it ends by lauding Him as the glorious King of the universe. The more His perfections are before our hearts, the more spiritual will be our worship and the more reverent and fervent our supplications. The more the soul is engaged in contemplation of God Himself, the more spontaneous and sincere will be its praise. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). Is it not our failure at this point that is so often the cause of blessing being withheld from us? "Let the people

praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Ps. 67:5, 6). If we do not praise God for His mercies, how can we expect Him to bless us with His mercies? "For Thine is the Kingdom." These words set forth God's universal right and authority over all things, by which He disposes of them according to His pleasure. God is Supreme Sovereign in creation, providence, and grace. He reigns over heaven and earth, all creatures and things being under His full control. The words "and the power" allude to God's infinite sufficiency to execute His sovereign right and to perform His will in heaven and earth. Because He is the Almighty, He has the ability to do whatsoever He pleases. He never slumbers nor wearies (Ps. 121:3, 4); nothing is too hard for Him (Matthew 19:26); none can withstand Him (Dan. 4:35). All forces opposed to Him and to the Church's salvation He can and will overthrow. The phrase "and the glory" sets forth His ineffable excellency: since He has absolute sovereignty over all and commensurate power to dispose of all, He is therefore all-glorious. God's glory is the grand goal of all His works and ways, and of His glory He is ever jealous (Isa. 48:11, 12). To Him belongs the exclusive glory of being the Answerer of prayer. Let us next notice that the doxology is introduced by the conjunction for, which here has the force of because or on account of the fact that Thine is the Kingdom, etc. This doxology is not only an acknowledgement of God's perfections, but a most powerful plea as to why our petitions should be heard. Christ is here teaching us to employ the for of argumentation. Thou art able to grant these requests, for Thine is the Kingdom, etc. While the doxology undoubtedly belongs to the prayer as a whole and is brought in to enforce all seven petitions, yet it seems to us to have a special and more immediate reference to the last one: "but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the Kingdom. . . ." O Father, the number and power of our enemies are indeed great, and they are rendered the more formidable because of the treachery of our own wicked hearts. Yet we are encouraged to implore Thy assistance against them, because all the attempts made by sin and Satan against us are really assaults upon Thy sovereignty and dominion over us and the promotion of Thy glory by us. "For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory." What encouragement is here! Two things especially inspire confidence towards God in prayer: the realization that He is willing and that He is able. Both are here intimated. That God bids us, through Christ His Son, to address Him as our Father is an indication of His love and an assurance of His care for us. But God is also the King of kings, possessing infinite power. This truth assures us of His sufficiency and guarantees His ability. As the Father, He provides for His children; as the King, He will defend His subjects. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:13). "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob" (Ps. 44:4). It is for God's own honor and glory that He manifests His power and shows Himself strong on behalf of His own. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20, 21). What instruction is here! First, we are taught to enforce our petitions with arguments drawn from the Divine perfections. God's universal kingship, His power, and His glory are to be turned into prevailing pleas for obtaining the things we need. We are to practice what Job sought to do: "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments" (Job 23:4). Second, we are clearly directed to join petition and praise together. Third, we are taught to pray with the utmost reverence. Since God is so great and powerful a King, He is to be feared (Isa. 8:13). Hence it follows that we are to prostrate ourselves before Him in complete submission to His sovereign will. Fourth, we are instructed to make a full surrender and subjection of ourselves to Him; otherwise we do but mock God when we acknowledge verbally His dominion over us (Isa. 29:13). Fifth, by praying thus, we are trained to make His glory our chief concern, endeavoring so to walk that our lives show forth His praise. "For ever." How marked is the contrast between our Father's Kingdom, power, and glory and the fleeting dominion and evanescent glory of earthly monarchs. The glorious Being whom we

address in prayer is "from everlasting to everlasting. . . God" (Ps. 90:2). Christ Jesus, in whom He is revealed and through whom prayer is offered, is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (Heb. 13:8). When we pray aright, we look beyond time into eternity and measure present things by their connection with the future. How solemn and expressive are these words for ever! Earthly kingdoms decay and disappear. Creaturely power is puny and but for a moment. The glory of human beings and of all mundane things vanishes like a dream. But the Kingdom and power and glory of Jehovah are susceptible to neither change nor diminution, and they shall know no end. Our blessed hope is that, when the first heaven and earth have passed away, the Kingdom and power and glory of God will be known and adored in their wondrous reality through all eternity. "Amen." This word intimates the two things required in prayer, namely, a fervent desire and the exercise of faith. For the Hebrew word Amen (often translated "verily" or "truly" in the New Testament) means "so be it" or "it shall be so." This twofold meaning of supplication and expectation is plainly hinted at in the double use of Amen in Psalm 72:10: "And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen." God has determined it shall be so, and the whole Church expresses its desire: "So be it." This "Amen" belongs and applies to each part and clause of the prayer: "Hallowed be Thy name. Amen"—and so forth. Uttering the Amen, both in public and private prayers, we express our longings and affirm our confidence in God's power and faithfulness. It is itself a condensed and emphatic petition: believing in the verity of God's promises and resting on the stability of His government, we both cherish and acknowledge our confident hope in a gracious answer.

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