

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

by Timothy Tow

Timothy Tow's sermon emphasizes the Lord's Prayer as a model for approaching God with reverence, making petitions, and giving praise.

Scripture: Psalm 50:23, Matthew 6:9, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 6:6

Topics: "The Lord's Prayer", "Christian Prayer Life"

Description

Timothy Tow preaches on the significance of the Lord's Prayer, emphasizing its importance as a model prayer that teaches believers how and what to pray. He addresses the controversy of its recitation in worship, highlighting the power of the words in subduing hearts and fostering forgiveness and humility. The sermon delves into the three main parts of the Lord's Prayer: Adoration, Petition, and Ascription, providing insights into each section and its relevance to believers' daily lives and spiritual growth.

Transcript

Text: Matt 6:9-15

The Lord's Prayer is recorded both in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11) introduces us to the text. This is our model prayer, for it teaches us how and what to pray. It is an important part of our Bible-Presbyterian Liturgy.

One of our B-P sons, who now declares himself an Independent, has removed the reciting of the Lord's Prayer in worship because he says it has become mechanical and therefore meaningless. I retort this is what our Lord has given to the Church in answer to a disciple's request and therefore to be used in our worship. The petition, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" is most effective to subdue me before Him should I have a quarrel with my wife! There is power in the words of our Lord.

Though only five verses long, commentaries on these verses have grown to book length. For our message today we can divide the Lord's Prayer into three parts.

I. Adoration

"Our Father, who art in heaven." The modernists and liberals will say this is a prayer to the Father of all mankind. Buddhists and Muslims can pray this prayer. And why not? When I worshipped at a Methodist Church in Penang over 50 years ago on my way to America, the pastor offered even the Lord's Supper to "brothers" of other faiths on the concept of the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man."

This concept is affirmed by none other than Billy Graham. In a broadcast in Southern California May 31, 1971 Billy said, "He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and they are going to be with us in heaven."

What Billy says, however, contradicts Peter. The Apostle declares, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

We can come to the Father in heaven only through Jesus Christ. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6). He is the only begotten Son of the Father and by believing in Him we are become adopted children (Rom 8:15) whereby we call Him, Abba, Father.

"Hallowed be thy name." This is the positive expression of the III Commandment which says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Because when we approach God, know how reverent we must be, for He is the Father Almighty, the Lord of hosts. If God's Word teaches us to honour the king (I Pet 2:17) how much more must we honour God.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." The ultimate state of God's Kingdom on earth, says J.C. Ryle, is when Christ comes again and establishes the throne of David in Jerusalem and rules the earth a thousand years of peace when men will do the will of God as never before. This doctrine of the Restoration of Israel is one important tenet of our Bible-Presbyterian faith.

II. Petition

"Give us this day our daily bread." This petition involves our physical needs. We need God's help earning a living. Deut 8:18 reminds us that it is He who gives us power to get wealth. Not only wealth, but also health. There is a Chinese saying, "Not to get sick, that is good health, is equivalent to good wealth." But it is not for a Christian to pray to be rich. We should rather seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto us. The Apostle Paul says, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil" (I Tim 6:6-10).

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." In America we repeat these very words. In Singapore which is under English culture we say, "And forgive us our trespasses. . ." This is due to the Common Prayer Book from which we in the mission schools have been taught. Nevertheless the explanatory verse 14 three times uses "trespasses" which backs up the usage of the English Lord's Prayer. This emphasizes our spiritual need to live a holy life which often is tainted by our sinfulness in trespassing against our neighbours. Therefore, if we need our Father's forgiveness it is incumbent for us to forgive those who trespass against us.

Another spiritual weakness is our inclination to temptation. As discretion is the better part of valour the surest way not to be led into temptation is to obey God's injunction. Paul says to young Timothy, "Flee also youthful lusts"! (II Tim 2:22). Whether old or young, we are to heed this command. Eve taught us a lesson. If she did not get near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and keep on admiring it, she would not have succumbed to the Temptation. There is a saying, "Out of sight, out of mind."

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." To deliver us from evil, there is the physical as well as the moral. As this world is ruled by sin, both the physical and moral realms are affected. Sickness, accident, danger, death are of the physical. We need God's protection from all these, e.g. accidents. We need to pray for safety in travel, for example. But be sure to thank Him after a safe return.

Spiritual evil, yea, even the Devil himself is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He is ever on the move to trip us, to cause us to sin, to fall into the pit of hell. Do you always look to Him in prayer?

III. Ascription

This is from the verb "ascribe." It means to give praise to God. Therefore our prayer cannot end without rendering praise to God. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me" (Ps 50:23). So, we end with "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." We must exalt our loving God, for He is the Father Almighty through our Lord Jesus Christ. When we conclude our prayer with such cumulative praise then He pours down His benediction on His children. And are not our hearts uplifted and our burdens cast away through the three steps of Adoration, Petition and Ascription? Amen.

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