



BY VINCENT GANNON

Scripture: Matthew 6:9.

Subject - Part 33: The Disciples Prayer - Part 1.

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your Name.

As we look at the earthly ministry of Jesus, we see how important prayer was to Him personally. He often got up very early to be alone with the Father in prayer and one of His favourite places in the evening was the Mount of Olives or some other quiet spot to pray. Prayer was the spiritual air that Jesus breathed every moment while here on earth. We know from the New Testament that He continues that ministry on our behalf [John 17; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1]. If you have been following the study you will know that the lesson here is about our heart attitude both to prayer and in prayer. Just in previous verses, Jesus pointed out that the praying of the religious was in most cases, just hypocritical.

Now Jesus addresses His own disciples, with the way they ought to pray. To be an obedient disciple of Christ, to experience the fullness of communion with God, and to open the floodgates of heaven's blessings, believers must pray as Jesus prayed. There are times of course when prayer is difficult - we don't know how to pray regarding a situation for example, and Romans 8:26 tells us in these cases, *So too the [Holy] Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer nor how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings and groanings too deep for utterance.* (Amp Clas.)

Here Jesus teaches us how to pray, and when we pray, every other part of our lives will be strengthened and put in proper perspective. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones has beautifully expressed it, in his Studies in the Sermon on the Mount, *"Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face to God."*

The Bible teaches a great deal about the importance and power of prayer.

Prayer begins in Faith. The bible tells us in Hebrews 11:6 - ***But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.***

Prayer begins with a personal relationship with the God of the Bible. This speaks of friendship, fellowship and relationship with the one and true and living God. Prayer is effective; it makes a difference. James tells us in his epistle in chapter 5:16 - ***“The effective prayer of a righteous man, can accomplish much”***. Abraham’s servant prayed, and Rebekah appeared. Jacob wrestled and prayed, and Esau’s mind was turned from twenty years of revenge. Moses prayed, and Amalek was struck. Hannah prayed, and Samuel was born. Isaiah and Hezekiah prayed, and in twelve hours one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians were slain. Elijah prayed, and there were three years of drought; he prayed again, and rain came. Those are but a small sampling of answered prayer just from the Old Testament. The Jews to whom Jesus preached should have had unlimited confidence in the power of prayer.

Prayer is vital to every other aspect of kingdom living. We cannot, for example, give (*Matt. 6:2-4*) or fast (*Matt 6:16-18*) properly unless we are in constant communion with God. The only giving that God wants is that which is sincere, willing, and done to His glory and that giving comes from a life of personal communion with Him. Fasting is meaningless apart from prayer, because apart from prayer it is apart from God. It will be a meaningless religious ritual. The greatest emphasis in this passage (*6:1-18*), therefore, is given to prayer.

Is it possible that many don’t believe that the God who saved them is the same God we have just been speaking about? Why is it we have time, or make time, for everything else but for prayer? How come many of God’s people are missing from the most important meeting of the church, the prayer meeting? Would our attitude to meeting for prayer with fellow believers be different if we lived in an antichristian environment? Perhaps or perhaps not, but what is certain is that it has a great deal to do with your personal relationship with God. And this is what lies at the heart of all we do as believers. Biblical Christianity is not Judaism, and there is nothing in Judaism that comes even close to Biblical Christianity. This is what Jesus is clearly teaching. We have examined the difference, in relation to many of the teachings and traditions, and every one of them fell far short of God’s revelation.

God's supreme purpose for prayer, the purpose beyond all other purposes, is to glorify Himself. Although nothing benefits a believer more than prayer, the purpose in praying must first of all be for the sake of God, not self. Prayer is, above all, an opportunity for God to manifest His goodness and glory. An old saint said, *"True prayer brings the mind to the immediate contemplation of God's character and holds it there until the believer's soul is properly impressed."* Jesus affirmed the purpose of prayer when He said in John 14:13, *"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified"*.

Contrary to much emphasis in the evangelical church today, true prayer, like true worship, centres on God's glory, not on man's needs. It is not simply to lay claim on God's promises, much less make demands of Him, but to acknowledge His sovereignty, to see the display of His glory, and to obey His will. We are so earthbound that we need the help of the Holy Spirit to give us the lift needed to come before God without self.

As we come to the "Disciples prayer" set out for us here in verses 9 to 15, it is a marvellous outline of what true prayer should be. The prayer has two sections, just like the commandments, the first section from verse 9 to 10 deals with God's glory which is very important. The second part from verse 11-13 has to do with man's need. Each of them have three petitions. The first three have to do with God's name, His kingdom and His will. The second three which has to do with man, his daily bread, forgiveness, and protection from temptation.

Jesus lists nine elements or aspects that I'm going to suggest to you are aspects of both personal prayer and corporate prayer. It includes

1-Faith in verse 9 - 'Our Father in Heaven. 2-Worship 'Hallowed be your name'. 3-Expectation in verse 10 'may your kingdom come'. 4-Submission in verse 10 - may your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. 5-Petition in verse 11 'give us this day our daily bread.' 6-Confession in verse 12 'forgive us our debts'. 7-Compassion 'and we forgive our debtors'. 8-Dependence in verse 13 'lead us not into temptation' and 9-Acknowledgement at the end of verse 13 'yours is the kingdom yours is the power, yours is the glory'.

Jesus starts the prayer with 'Our Father'. Jesus makes no mention of where we should pray. But just cast your mind back to the last time we looked at verse 6 when he instructed us to go into our "secret chamber"; remember we said that was to stress the single-mindedness of

prayer, the need to block out every other concern but God. Jesus Himself had no “inner room” to call His own during His earthly ministry (*Matthew 8:20 and Luke 9:58*). We find Jesus praying in many different places and in different situations, for instance calming the storm in Luke 8:22-25, over the bread and fish in John 6:11. We could list many more both public prayer and private prayer. Paul again encourages us to “*pray in every place*” in 1 Timothy 2:8. You and I may not consider that a big deal but it was for the disciples as the synagogue as well as the Temple were by-passed.

Also Jesus did not specify a time to pray. *How radically was that?* For the disciples it was a big deal. Jesus, as well as the Old Testament saints and New Testament prayed whenever they needed God. We can see them praying both at regular times as well as on special occasions. Like Daniel and his friends when they were in danger and even when especially blessed. But all that was forgotten it seems until Jesus, as it were, lifts the time barrier set by the religious. Jesus is in fact telling them that in any posture, in any attire, at any time, in any place, and under any and in all circumstances prayer is appropriate. In other words prayer is to be a total way of life, an open and constant communion with God.

Ephesians 6:18-19 says - *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel*

and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 which simply says - ‘*pray without ceasing*’

It is very important to note these facts because from their knowledge of Scripture they would have known that God wanted them to pray. They knew that He heard and responded to their prayers and that praying should be continual. However, they had taken their eyes and minds and heart of His Word and it was, and continues to be, a very slippery slope for any of God’s children when they do this. We can look out at the church and see the same thing happening today. From the Scriptures they knew that prayer should incorporate certain elements such as, adoration. That is the expression of the soul's realization of God's presence in His transcendent greatness, holiness and lovingkindness. As a form of prayer, adoration is to be distinguished from other forms, such as petition, thanksgiving, confession and intercession.

Praise which is to praise God is to declare who God is and what He does. Praise honours God because of His divine deeds and character. Thanksgiving is best told to us in the Scriptures. Philippians 4:6 tells us *“Do not be anxious about anything, but by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”*.

Ephesians 5:19-20 instructs us to *“Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”*.

They knew that they should have a sense of “awe” at God’s holiness and a desire to obey God’s commands, confession of sin, concern for others, perseverance and humility. But it had gone terribly wrong for them. They had forgotten the teaching of Scripture, even, sound Biblical teaching. Don’t think that it can’t happen today. Many want to be entertained, they don’t want to engage with God, nor do they want to engage with God on behalf of others, or to join their hearts with others in the place of prayer. With the coming persecution we will have to learn the lessons we have been told about by those who have been through it.

How we view prayer is very important. It is not trying to get God to do as we want Him to do in any shape, form or fashion. Prayer is not trying to get God to give us a thumbs up in relation to our plans. Prayer is affirming God’s sovereignty, His righteousness, and majesty. We should be seeking to fall into step with God’s will to be done and for His glory.

As you read the disciples prayer we see that Jesus gives a complete view of all the basic elements of right praying and every one of them centres on God. It acknowledges His paternity (pa-tern-nity), (Fatherhood); His priority (Thy will be done); His program (on earth); His plan (as it is in heaven); His provision; His pardon; His protection, and of course His pre-eminence. Each and every one of these are bursting with meaning and it’s truths are impossible to exhaust. When you give this prayer template serious thought, you can tell this was never meant to be chanted or formulated in the way it has become, and just rattled off the way the Jews, Muslims, and almost all others do with their prayers. This prayer is solely exclusive to the disciples of Christ, it is not for everyone or anyone, after all it is to “Our Father” not the god of man’s imagination that we pray to or any other god.

We must contend for the fact that God is the Father only of those who have come to His family through Jesus Christ His Son. I want to direct your attention to John 8:37-47, as an

example, to show you that Jesus did not consider that God was the ‘Father’ of every Jew. Scripture makes it completely clear that God is the Creator of the unbeliever, each and every person bears the image of God. For the majority, that image is badly marred through sin. Spiritually speaking, unbelievers have another ‘father’, see Ephesians 2:1-3 and John 8:44. John 1:12 tells us - *‘But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name’*. Also see Romans 8:14; Galatians 3:26; Hebrews 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:4.

Only believers who belong to the Son can come to God as His beloved children, and call Him our Father. Over the years, the many years, the ungodly have tried to bridge the gap by implying that the words we find here, pertains to them as well. They call it the “common prayer” but there is nothing common about it at all as we will see.

Please note that “faithful Jews” knew God as their Father in several ways. They saw Him as the Father of Israel (see *1 Chronicles 29:10, Psalm 68:5, Isaiah 64:8, Romans 8:15 and 1 Peter 1:17*). God had chosen that nation to be His special people; the faithful Jew would point to Isaiah 63:16, Exodus 4:22 and Jerimiah 31:9. They would have gone further and seen God more intimately and personal by pointing to Psalm 89:26 and 103:13. But over the centuries because of disobedience, their flirting with pagan gods and the influences of the people around them they lost more than they could afford. They saw God only as ‘Father’ in a remote, distant, faded, and unreal figure, who had once guided their ancestors. God was in heaven but far from their hearts.

Jesus now reaffirms to them, His disciples, that God is their Father who is in Heaven. Not the god of stone or flesh or some mystic, supernatural being. But the Creator God of Genesis who had revealed Himself with many infallible proofs even stood in their midst before them in the Person of Christ. Jesus used the title “Father” in all His prayers except one, when He was on the Cross - see *Matthew 27:46* as there He cried “My God, My God” signifying the separation He endured for bearing away the sins of mankind. Do we realise the wonder to be able to come before the Creator of all things and the Sustainer of all things and cry, “Abba Father”. While He enjoys the worship and adoration of all of heaven, when the weakest of His children cry, “Father”, it is to that cry He gives His attention.

To be able to go to God as our heavenly Father, first of all means the end of fear, that fear that the pagans had and have of their deities. As believers the only barrier in our approach to God is the ones we place there. Secondly the knowledge of God's fatherhood ought to settle uncertainties and give hope. Jesus pointed out that a good earthly father will spare no effort to help and protect his child or children, how much more, and note the word more, will the heavenly Father, love, protect, and help His children. (Matthew 7:11, John 10:29, John 14:21).

In verse 9, when it says 'Our Father who art in Heaven', it uses a plural word literally meaning heavens. This usage delineates the Lord and Father from every other god of man as it points to the dwelling place of God Most High. God is not a god of just the comois or simply of earth but He lives outside of time, space and all that constrains man-kind. He is God of all! He is incomprehensible to man but can be known by all. He is divine yet reachable by faith in Jesus. When a person truly surrenders to God who is in Heaven, that person acknowledges His authority, His Majesty, and His sovereignty. That person is acknowledging that God is the ultimate source of power and privilege.

Knowing God in Heaven as our Father settles the matter of loneliness. Now it is good to have another human being to speak with but that may not be our portion. If we find ourselves in the situation that we are all alone or even if we are rejected and forsaken by our family, friends, fellow believers, and the rest of the world, we know that our heavenly Father will never leave us or forsake us. Jesus said, *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him"* (John 14:21, Psalms. 68:5-6).

The next thing we find here is that knowing God's fatherhood should settle the matter of selfishness. Jesus taught us to pray, Our Father, using the plural pronoun because we are fellow children with all the rest of the household of God. There are no singular personal pronouns in the entire prayer. We pray holding up to God what is best for all, not just for one.

Did you know that knowing God as our Father settles the matter of resources. He is our Father who [is] in heaven. All the resources of heaven are available to us when we trust God as our heavenly Supplier. Our Father *"has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the*

heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). We may not think that we have every material blessing, but the Lord is only interested in giving that which can not rust, be destroyed, or taken from us. What He gives is eternal and ought to be sufficient.

Then of course, God’s fatherhood should settle the matter of obedience. If Jesus, God’s begotten Son, came down from heaven not to do His own will but His Father’s (John 6:38), how much more are we, as adopted children, to do only His will. Obedience to God is one of the supreme marks of our relationship to Him as His children. *“For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother”* (Matthew 12:50).

Yet in His grace, God loves and cares even for His children who are disobedient. The story of Luke 15 should be called the parable of the loving father rather than the prodigal son. It is first of all a picture of our heavenly Father, who can forgive a self-righteous child who remains moral and upright and also forgive one who becomes self-indulgent, wanders away, and returns.

‘Our Father’ indicates God’s eagerness to have a relationship with us as He lends His ear, His power, and His eternal blessing to the petitions of His children, once those petitions serve his children best and further reveals His purpose and glory. There is nothing *“common”* about our glorious Father’s name and we do not subscribe to this prayer as representing the common *“Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man”* and *“cum-ba-ya, my lord.”* We hold to the Biblical teaching of Jesus, and will not compromise one bit. Nor will we allow ourselves to be embarrassed into praying with those who have a different father than ourselves. We are not ecumenical nor are we intolerant of others, just protective of our position in Christ.

This then leads us into God’s priority which is **“hallowed be thy name,”** as we surrender and worship Him. If you were to ask a person who had just recited the disciples prayer in a mechanical way as to its meaning, they would be lost for words. So many non-believers who do say this disciples prayer have no problem in taking this Holy name in vain. They might kill you if you took their mothers name in vain but not the Lord’s. Try that in a public place with Mohamad’s name, and see where it will get you? But our God is Holy, and Hallowed be His name. It is only through Christ can we be saved, no-one else has the power or authority, which is why Peter said in Acts 4:11 and 12 -

This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

And Paul in Philippians 2:10-11.

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God is to have priority in every aspect of our lives, and certainly in our times of deepest communion with Him. Praying is not to be a casual routine that gives passing homage to God, but should open up great dimensions of reverence, awe, appreciation, honour, and adoration. "Hallowed be thy name", is a phrase which protects against any sentimentalism, overuse or abuse of the name Father, which nowadays is prone to be, for example - daddy, the man-up-stairs, the main boss, Pops and the list goes on. We should never ever forget that God, who is our Father, is God, is Holy, is Divine, is Sovereign, deserves all honour and all praise, all of our worship and deep love and respect.

God's name signifies infinitely more than His titles or appellations (or names). His names represents all that He is, His character, plan, and will. When Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the commandments for the second time, it reads in Exodus 34:5-7 that he *"called upon the name of the Lord. Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin"*.

The characteristics of God given in verses 6-7 of this chapter of Exodus are the equivalent of "the name of the Lord" mentioned in verse 5.

It is not because we simply know God's titles that we love and trust Him, but because we know His character. Psalm 9:10 says - *"Those who know Thy name will put their trust in Thee," David said, "for Thou, O Lord, hast not forsaken those who seek Thee"*.

God's name is seen in His faithfulness. In another psalm, such as Psalm 7:17 David declared, ***"I will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High"*** (cf. Psalm 113:1-4).

In the typical form of Hebrew poetry, God's righteousness and His name are paralleled, showing their equivalence. When the psalmist said in chapter 20:7, ***"Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; but we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God"***, he had much more in mind than the title by which God is called. He spoke of the fullness of God's person.

Each of the many Old Testament names and titles of God shows a different facet of His character and will. He is called, for example, Elohim, the Creator God; El Elyon, ***"possessor of heaven and earth"***; Jehovah-Jireh, ***"the Lord will provide"***; Jehovah-Shalom, ***"the Lord our peace"***; Jehovah-Tsidkenu, (Ta-sid-ken-u) ***"the Lord our righteousness"***; and many others. All of those names speak of God's attributes. His names not only tell who He is but what He is like.

But Jesus Himself gives the clearest teaching about what God's name means, because Jesus Christ is God's greatest name. ***"I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world"*** (John 17:6). Everything the Son of God did on earth manifested God's name. As the perfect manifestation of God's nature and glory (John 1:14), Jesus was the perfect manifestation of God's name. Hallowed is an archaic English word used to translate the Greek word which means to make holy or count something as worthy or holy. It means to treat something with a profound sense of respect for what it is because it's sacred. Words from the same root are translated "holy, saint, sanctify, sanctification," etc. God's people are commanded to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), but God is acknowledged as being holy. That is the meaning of praying hallowed be Your name: to attribute to God the holiness that already is, and always has been, supremely and uniquely His. To hallow God's name is to revere, honour, glorify, and obey Him as singularly perfect.

As John Calvin observed, ***"that God's name should be hallowed was nothing other than to say that God should have His own honour, of which He was so worthy, that men should never think or speak of Him without the greatest veneration"***.

Hallowing God's name, like every other manifestation of righteousness, begins in the heart. ***"Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts,"*** Peter tells us (1 Pet. 3:15), using a form of the

word that hallowed translates. When we sanctify Christ in our hearts we will also sanctify Him in our lives.

We also hallow God's name by having true knowledge about Him. False ideas about the Sovereign One are irreverent. Origen, one of the early church fathers said, *"The man who brings into his concept of God ideas that have no place there takes the name of the Lord God in vain."* Today, yet again there are people who try to make God out as a woman or even "it" and such people have no reverence for God whatsoever.

Discovering and believing the truth about God demonstrates reverence for Him; and willing ignorance or wrong doctrine demonstrate irreverence. We cannot revere a God whose character and will we do not know or care about. But acknowledging God's existence and having true knowledge about Him are not enough to hallow His name. We must have a constant awareness of His presence. David put the focus of his life where it should always be, when he wrote the following in Psalm 16:8, *"I have set the Lord continually before me"*.

The Father's name is most hallowed when we behave in conformity to His will. For Christians to live in disobedience to God is to take His name in vain, claiming as Lord someone whom we do not follow as Lord. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' Jesus warned, 'will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven'"* (Matt. 7:21). When we eat, drink, and do everything else to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), that is hallowing His name.

Finally, to hallow God's name is to attract others to Him by our commitment, to *"let [our] light shine before men in such a way that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16). Psalm 34:3 sums up the teaching in this verse with the lovely exhortation, *"O magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together."*

Can we call God our Father and refuse to surrender that God's sovereignty in our lives? The truth is, we can only call God Father because we've been made children of God but we can't call God Father if we exalt some other god, like materialism, the god of matter or rationalism, the god of my ability to think things through or believe in a God that I can observe and which make sense to me. So, whether it's idealism - the god of ideas or materialism - the god of the world in which we live, we will sometimes substitute the true

Wednesday 28th April 2021

God of the Bible and as Christians we have got to be extremely careful of this, especially when things are going very well for us, or very bad.

No one can call the God of the Bible 'Father' unless you've experienced a right relationship with Jesus, His son. The Bible says in the opening chapter of John's Gospel that Jesus came unto his own and his own didn't receive him, but as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God to those who believe in his name. No one else has this right only those who are born not of blood not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of the will of God. This is why John the Apostle in his little epistle will later write *'he who has the son has the father and he who does not have the son does not have the father'*.

When you pray and you can truly say my Father, you are surrendering your terms and you are accepting his terms to be the rightful ruler of your life. The moment that you decide to pray becomes an acknowledgement that you can't but that He can.

I hope this has helped you in understanding what the opening verse means. And why we should be very careful, not to be drawn in with others who do not know what those words mean. What a privilege to be able to come together as true believers and rejoice in His wonderful name..

Amen.