

The Manner of Prayer  
(Matthew 6:7-15)  
By Randy Wages  
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

## I. Introduction

Turn with me once again to the book of Matthew, chapter 6. This is a continuation of our study of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. We're currently in Chapter 6 and we've covered verses 1-6 and verses 16-23. So today we will go back and examine separately those verses we skipped over, our text for today being verses 7-15. Here we find Christ's instructions regarding the subject of prayer. And beginning in verse 9, we find what is commonly referred to as "The Lord's Prayer." Now I think that's an unfortunate title and inappropriate when you consider that it would make no sense whatsoever for our Lord to ask to be forgiven for His own sins, for He had no sin. The scriptures plainly declare that he knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), that He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). He is described as a lamb without spot who offered Himself without spot. No, He didn't pray this as a prayer, but rather as verse 9 says, He was providing instruction regarding the manner of prayer. And that's the title of my message today, "The Manner of Prayer."

You may recall that in the verses leading up to our text for today, verses 5-6, that Christ dealt with the motive of prayer, pointing out that if one prays to be seen of men, then the applause and esteem of others shall constitute their reward ó and that's it ó they have their reward. But Christ commands that we are to pray to God in secret, not to be seen of men. And in verses 7 and 8, where we're going to pickup today, I believe we see a transition from His discussion on the motive for prayer to the subject of the manner of prayer as set forth in verses 9-15.

Look with me quickly at the beginning of verse 9. There Christ states, "***After this manner therefore pray ye...***" He does not say, "this is my prayer so pray like me." He does not say to repeat these exact words by praying them over and over. But rather He commands them, "***After this manner therefore pray ye...***" Well, as you've often heard, when we see a

Therefore in scripture, it behooves us to see what it is there for. So that's why we will begin our reading back in verse 7 where Christ says,

***“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. <sup>8</sup>Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”***

Christ tells them to not use vain repetitions. That is, do not mechanically repeat meaningless or mindless recitations. And I believe this is also properly directed at those who mindlessly repeat chants and memorized prayers. And I believe that can include even the words of our Lord found here in this very passage. You know, there is absolutely nothing wrong with quoting God's word. We esteem His Word as God's truth & the very instrument used by God the Holy Spirit to give spiritual life to men. Yet when men mechanically, without thought, vainly repeat, even the words of our Lord given to describe the manner in which we should pray (what so many call the Lord's prayer here), then they are sadly missing the whole purpose of what Christ is teaching. There are religious denominations that make a practice to regularly and methodically repeat verbatim (over and over again) these words of Christ that begin with ***“Our Father who art in Heaven...”*** even though these words were given to instruct men as to the proper manner of prayer because men are prone to vain repetitions. When He said, ***“After this manner therefore pray ye:...”*** & that's what the therefore is there for. It's an ironically sad observation, but consider this. He in essence is saying, “Don't repeat these vain repetitions but instead pray after this manner.” And confused, fallen sinners (such as we all are by nature) do just the opposite and take His very words of instruction and, given our sinful tendencies, make them nothing more than a vain repetition.

He goes on to communicate in verse 8, “Don't be like that & thinking you'll be heard for your ritualistic endeavors to chalk up airtime with God.” The gist of this is, “If your prayers are directed to the true and living God & they are directed at One who already knows everything you need, before you ever ask Him.” He doesn't need to hear your voice over and over again. So we can learn from this that in addressing the manner in which we should pray, it is to be God-ward directed. That is & (1) directed to the sovereign, omniscient God who knows your needs before you're even aware of them. And you know, this should be a great encouragement for us to pray, for it is

to an all knowing, all powerful God who knows what is best for us and is able to deliver accordingly. And secondly, (2) your prayers are to be directed to a God whose hearing of them is not at all conditioned on how often, how long, or even how well you pray. Certainly by considering the context here, this should help us to better understand the manner after which we should approach God in prayer. So follow with me now beginning in verse 9 where it reads:

***“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. <sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”***

In Luke chapter 11, it’s recorded that one of the disciples approached Christ and said, “***Lord, teach us to pray.***” And He answered by saying, “***When you pray, say Our Father which art in heaven...***,” and He continues with a similar, though condensed, version of the instruction He gave here in Matthew 6. Now I believe that many use the Luke version where Christ says, “***...say Our Father who art in Heaven***” to justify the compulsion of religious folks to publicly and frequently recite this word for word as a prayer. However, the gist of both of these passages is that we are to pray in this way, in this manner. It provides us a pattern or model for prayer. I’m not saying that it is never appropriate to repeat these words, but I am saying that mindless, vain repetition of even these words is totally contrary to the context.

#### 1. Our Father which art in heaven...:

So let’s examine this phrase by phrase. First, it begins, “***Our Father which art in heaven...***” Here we see the Object to whom we pray. It is to One with whom we have a most endearing relationship ó our Father ó One who has our best interests at heart. He is the father of all by creation, but to those who discover their oneness with Christ ó He is far more. In John chapter 20, when Christ appeared after His resurrection to Mary Magdalene, He said, “***...Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.***” No ó it’s not just my Father, but our Father which art in heaven ó emphasizing how everyone for whom Christ lived,

died and arose ó are all equally blessed and forgiven based upon the one righteousness He established in His obedience unto death.

We see in the Old Testament this reliance on the relationship with God as the Father of the Old Testament saints ó and such is the case with all of God's spiritual children. Listen to what was written in Isaiah 64, beginning in verse 6. There, it was admitted, *õBut we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. <sup>7</sup>And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. <sup>8</sup>But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.ö* This is the mindset of one who sees God as just to condemn them based upon any merit proceeding from themselves ó the filthy rags of their own righteousness. Yet these also know that God is just to save them and justify them based solely upon the merit of their Substitute, the righteousness established by the Lord Jesus Christ and charged to their account. They find their relief in *õour fatherö ó õour potterö* as He is described here, who alone chose us unto salvation in Christ to be a joint heir with the firstborn as sons and daughters of the living God with an inheritance earned not by us ó but for us.

And notice Christ directs us to pray toward our Father which art in heaven. Psalms 103:19 reads, *õThe LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.*" In studying this, I was reminded again of the broader context of this entire sermon whose theme is the Gospel of the kingdom ó a kingdom or dominion ó a rule or reign of grace ó as Romans 5:21 reads, *õgrace reigning through righteousness.ö* We approach God in prayer as one who is on His throne ó a throne of grace. And this God who reigns by grace through righteousness ó that is based upon finding nothing meritorious outside of the perfect righteousness Christ established in satisfying law and justice ó this God is the one to whom we are to pray ó with an eye toward this God in heaven (ruling from this throne of grace where Christ sits at His right hand) in contrast with the false gods concocted in the imaginations of all men by nature who begin their quest for heaven traveling down the broad road that leads to destruction ó being subject to a throne not prepared in heaven, a construction shaped not by the potter molding the clay, but in the natural minds of fallen sinners ó a position which we can all identify with prior to God's work of grace that causes us to

see different. We are to pray to our Father in heaven ó where He has prepared a throne of grace by which His kingdom reigns and rules.

## 2. Hallowed be thy name

So, we pray unto our Father in heaven and our own desires and needs are secondary as our first consideration is ***“Hallowed be thy name.”*** This should take precedence in our prayers for the glory of God’s name is His first design and cause for all things ó including my and your very existence. All that God does is ultimately for His glory. So every other request and, consequently our understanding of the rest of this model prayer are subordinate to and consistent with this overriding desire. This reflects a God-given respect for the honor of the heavenly Father above all (and even if at the expense) of all our earthly relations.

Consider that everyone is identified by their name. Likewise, His name refers to the true and living God as He is identified and revealed. And we know from 2 Cor. 4:6 that God reveals something unique to the citizens of His kingdom that is only understood in the öface,ö i.e. ó the person and work, of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it’s only under the sound of God’s true Gospel that any receive an understanding of how God can be both a just God ó in pouring out His wrath on sin, not on the sinner but on His Substitute, Christ on the cross ó yet also a God of mercy ó showing mercy to a sinner (one deserving of God’s wrath if judged on his best efforts). And as we are brought to see and value how God can and does bestow his mercy without denying His justice based solely on the Person and work of Christ, then God’s name is hallowed, sanctified, or set apart, distinguished in the heart of the sinner as He is beheld as a just God and a Savior ó not a divided God who must deny one aspect of Himself (e.g. ó His justice) in order to show mercy to sinners. And only in the impeccable, sinless Christ, do we see law and justice satisfied based upon the sins of His people being charged to Him and the merits of His life and death being charged to all for whom He lived and died as a Substitute ó doing for sinners what they were hopeless to do for themselves. And thereby God gets all of the glory.

Consider that our Savior suffered and died all for the glory of his Father’s name. In John 12:27 ó 28, as Christ faced the sufferings He would endure on the cross, He said, ***“Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify thy name.”*** God’s glory was first and foremost even in the face of the suffering Christ was to endure. And here was where God’s glory is manifested in the highest, in Christ our mercy

seat. So be thankful if ó in spite of all our natural selfish desires for everything to go our way and never face any suffering, trials and difficulties ó if the Holy Spirit has granted unto you some measure of this God-given respect for the honor of His name above all else so that your sincere prayerful thoughts might also be ***“Hallowed be thy name!”***

3. õThy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.ö  
Next we see the phrase, ***õThy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.***” Now again let’s consider the context of this entire sermon. The theme of the Sermon on the Mount is the Gospel of the kingdom ó that is the good news of how God saves sinners based upon the establishment of righteousness ó a reign of righteousness. Christ has already set forth the righteousness that was needed. He said that this is why He came ó not to destroy the law but fulfill it ó that you needed a righteousness you can’t produce. And he proceeded to show the folly of imagining you could produce righteousness and summarized by telling us that it would require no less than the perfection that He Himself came to render in obedience to the law of God, even unto His death. He said in chapter 5, vs 20: ***õFor I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, (the best of the best put together) ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.***”

Now I believe Christ is staying on subject here when He says that our prayers should be focused upon the establishment of this kingdom ó ***õThy kingdom come.***” I recognize that many believe that this speaks to the kingdom coming into the minds and consciences of sinners when God the Holy Spirit gives them life. Certainly that takes place ó but I think here He is continuing to point to the work that He had come to complete. The literal Greek reading of that is õLet thy kingdom come.ö I believe Christ is telling this multitude that they are to be looking to Him and to that which he came to accomplish on the cross ó in essence saying õlet it happen ó I desire the certain success of the Savior because that’s what I need ó that’s where my hope is.ö Now based upon this interpretation, a verbatim repeating of these exact words as a prayer in our day saying, õLet his kingdom come,ö would not make sense and actually would amount to a denial of the work He has already completed and finished in establishing the kingdom ó this reign of righteousness ó on the cross. Why would any today pray for the establishment of His kingdom ó the establishment of this reign of righteousness? Well they won’t (in this sense) if they are trusting in the one

and only righteousness that meets the requirement of a holy God ó that is, the perfect satisfaction made by Christ in His life and death? He meant it when, while hanging on the cross, He said, ***“It is finished.”*** That kingdom, that throne, is established and He sits even now at the right hand of the Father, reigning and ruling over this kingdom. His kingdom has already come! Does this suggest that these words are not useful to us today? No ó this manner of praying with a focus on the cross ó on that which establishes the kingdom ó is no less important in our day. While the mindless repetition of these exact words doesn’t make sense in our day, still the hearts of the citizens of His kingdom are always drawn back to this same place ó to His finished work. As Paul said, ***“God forbid that I should glory save in the cross.”***

Now note that it reads, ***“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*** Turn with me over to Matthew chapter 26. Jesus had gone into the Garden of Gethsemane and in contemplation of the suffering he was about to endure on the cross, we read in verse 36: ***“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”*** And then look down at verse 42 where we read, ***“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”*** You see, it had to be done in earth. In heaven, in the presence of God there is no sin. The Father’s will is perfectly and completely complied with by the angels and the glorified saints. And it must be accounted so for any inhabitant of the earth if he or she is to enter His kingdom. They must possess a righteousness that was established in their name and nature. It must be done in earth.

Look with me quickly in Galatians 4 for I want you to see this. Beginning in vs. 4 it reads, ***“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,<sup>5</sup> To redeem them that were under the law, (His will had to be done in the earth!) that we might receive the adoption of sons.<sup>6</sup> And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Our Father who art in Heaven)<sup>7</sup> Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”*** Paul said, ***“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”*** (2 Cor. 2:2). This whole book, this whole sermon, this text on the

manner of prayer ó It's all about Christ and the accomplishment of the work He finished on the cross. ***“Thy will be done in earth!”***

4. Give us this day our daily bread.

Now consider the phrase, “Give us this day our daily bread.” I believe this is a proper acknowledgement that our sovereign God is the source of all things and that we are to recognize, acknowledge that, and rely upon it. And we need a daily application of bread both for the body and for the soul. In particular, we need to be constantly aware of what sustains our eternal life ó the bread of life ó Jesus Christ. In this petition, there is a tacit acknowledgement that as fallen sinners we have no inherent right to all the outward blessings of this life or of the life hereafter and we can merit none of them. So we rely upon the providence of God and of our blessings in Christ, day by day. The reading in the original has the connotation of a request for the bread that is needful. So we bow to the fact that He knows our needs better than we know our own and we trust that He, our loving Father shall supply accordingly.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

So let's look at the phrase in verse 12 where it reads, “***And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.***” I think it's helpful if we consider this along with Christ's own explanation given in verses 14 and 15. There we read, “***For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: <sup>15</sup>But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.***” I think this is to be understood much like we saw earlier in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:7, “***Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.***” Just as we saw there, in consideration of the whole of scriptures, those eternally blessed of God do not obtain His mercy because they are merciful. Likewise, there is no suggestion here that we are forgiven because we forgive others. That would be a denial of the Gospel of grace. You may recall our previous review of passages such as Colossians 1:13 where it speaks of God the Father as He, “***Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: <sup>14</sup>In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:***” Later in Matthew, in chapter 26, Christ Himself said in the last supper with His disciples that the wine represented His blood that was to be shed for the remission of sins. I John 1:7 tells us that “***...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.***” He doesn't forgive us of our sins because we forgive others.



Let us never place anything in rivalry with that which only the precious blood of Christ can and did produce.

It was interesting to learn that in Jewish writings, sins were commonly called "debts" as recorded here. They are called debts because on account of our sins, satisfaction to the law and justice of God was owed — a debt that we, as sinners, are incapable of paying. So great are our sins before an infinitely holy God that it took the payment of the blood of the impeccable, sinless God-man. As such, to pray after this manner presupposes an inability on our part to make or even contribute toward this satisfaction, denoting our inability to pay the debt — an acknowledgement that only God can forgive our sins on the one basis of the bloody, satisfying sacrifice of Christ Himself.

Listen, if you think your forgiveness is conditioned on your repentance or on your willingness to ask your concept of Deity to forgive you, then think again. If that is the case, you don't really need the forgiveness from this God whose holiness and justice required no less than the life and death of His dear Son. You don't need His mercy. Your forgiveness is in your hands, in the asking. You might as well ask that wall to forgive you to meet that condition. Listen, it took the shedding of infinitely valuable blood and where and for whom it was shed, there is forgiveness, remission for sins — they were put away then and there. This request for forgiveness that we need to daily ask for is that God would continually manifest and apply His pardon to the consciences of His sheep. We are to pray "forgive us" — "us" being His sheep, everyone for whom His precious blood was shed — those who are translated into His kingdom.

So we know that in verse 14, Christ is not speaking of the basis upon which God forgives us. That is God's grace and mercy in Christ alone. He is describing those who have been forgiven, as evidenced by their willingness to forgive accordingly. In verse 15, it is as if He is posing the question to those who refuse to forgive others, "What kind of a sense of pardon can they have? Have they experienced the forgiveness of sin which would influence them to forgive those who have offended them?" If not, they are only fooling themselves.

Believers are to cultivate a spirit of forgiveness. How? We do it by being ever mindful of God's love and forgiveness in Christ. Whenever our

thoughts concerning those who have done us wrong are that we will forgive them only when they have met certain conditions, stop and think of God's forgiveness of our sins. It was Christ who met the conditions, not us. It was Christ who satisfied law and justice, not us. And it is Christ's having met all the conditions of our forgiveness that produces our ashamedness over sin. When anyone offends us, our forgiveness of them is what ought to produce their sorrow and ashamedness rather than their sorrow and ashamedness meriting our forgiveness. This establishes what our attitude ought to be towards ourselves and toward one another. Our desire to forgive others is a mark that we ourselves have been pardoned by God. His connecting together here our forgiving others with God's forgiving us is to show that this spirit of forgiveness is not an option but rather that this spirit will necessarily manifest itself to some degree in those who have come to see their complete forgiveness and pardon in Christ.

6. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

Next in vs. 13 it reads, *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:”* Just as we need our daily bread, we know that we daily need His grace to keep us from the power of temptation that would cause us to be overcome by it. There are all sorts of temptations that appeal to us as sinners. Consider what Christ prayed in John 17:15: *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* All temptations (trials and troubles) are not evil in their design or outcome. Consider Job's suffering and the temptations he was confronted with. Such trials are used by God to humble us, to try and ultimately strengthen our faith and patience. I believe this is why this request is linked with the deliverance from evil ó this being understood by many to refer to deliverance from the evil one ó Satan Himself. As such, I think our prayers, offered in accordance with His will, are not to be for a total exemption from all temptations, but for a removal of the judgment of them ó that we be kept from the evil one, the accuser. And where is that judgment removed? Do you see how even in His instruction on the manner of prayer and in this specific petition how all is pointed toward the cross where Christ receives all the preeminence?

7. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Lastly, in the latter part of verse 13, we read: *“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* This ascribes everlasting kingdom, power, and glory to God and this should be the attitude and that which we acknowledge in approaching the throne of grace, ascribing to God

the glory that is due unto Him. He has all power to give us our daily bread, to keep us mindful and ever looking to the forgiveness of our sins in Christ, to preserve us from and deliver us out of temptation to keep us from judgment and accusation of Satan ó and all of this forever. Amen ó This ðamenö expresses the fervent desire, ðso be itö ó expressing our focus on Christ's fulfillment of His will in the earth. And it also is a manifestation of God-given faith and confidence in Our Father ó in acknowledging ðAmenö ó as in ðit shall be so.ö

I hope you've seen today that it's all about the One whose name is sometimes called the ðAmenö ó our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We should ever look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. God's name is hallowed in our hearts when we see and value with the eyes of God-given faith how that it was in Christ that God's perfect will was done in the earth. Let's always pray after this manner.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.

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