

Matthew 6:9-10 - Part 1

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[0 : 00] Please take out your copy of God's Word, which I hope you have with you, that is treasured in your heart and well read. And turn with me to Matthew chapter 6.

We've been preaching through the Sermon on the Mount in the past months. And this morning's text is part of what is commonly referred to as the Lord's Prayer.

So we will be considering prayer this morning and next Lord's Day, and I have a feeling the one after that as well. Prayer is not really practiced by many religious people across all sorts and types of religions.

It's also practiced with some sense of regularity by non-religious people. The great crises of our day often turn people to some form of prayer.

One study found that nearly 30% of atheists admitted that they prayed, quote unquote, sometimes. If this is true, then it is safe to say that prayer is something that is practiced with some sense of regularity by many people who we come into contact with day in and day out.

[1 : 18] Just think about how often and how acceptable it is to say and to hear the phrase, our thoughts and prayers go out to or offered to our thoughts and prayers.

We hear this constantly in the media when something tragic happens in our nation. So many people pray, but we must understand that not all prayer is the same.

Many pray to gods that are not gods at all, and it is very possible, even plausible, to pray to the right god wrongly.

The scripture has much to say about prayers offered up in vain. To stress the importance of our study this morning, I would like to show you some examples.

Some examples of the scripture speaking of prayers that God does not answer. I'm going to give you a dozen. I'm going to give them to you fast so that we can get to our text.

[2 : 26] I'll read a few texts. I'll give you a couple of references for your later study. God does not answer the prayer of those, number one, who have personal and selfish motives.

James 4.3, James writes, You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. God does not answer the prayer, secondly, of those who regard iniquity in their hearts.

See Psalm 66 and verse 18. Third, those who remain in sin. Isaiah chapter 59 and verse 2.

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Fourth, those who offer unworthy service to God.

See Malachi chapter 1 verses 6 through 8. And the priests whose prayers were not heard. Fifth, those who forsake God.

[3 : 32] See Jeremiah chapter 14 verses 10 through 12. Six, those who reject God's call. See Proverbs 1 verse 24 and 25 and later verse 28.

Seventh, those who will not heed God's law. Proverbs 28 and verse 9. If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

See also Zechariah chapter 7 verses 11 through 13. Eight, those who turn a deaf ear to the cry of the poor. See Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 13.

Ninth, we don't get this far very often, do we? Those who are violent. Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 15. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood. Tenth, those who worship idols. See Jeremiah chapter 11 verse 11 through 14.

[4 : 45] And Ezekiel chapter 8 verse 15 through 18. Eleventh, God is not here. Those who have no faith. James chapter 1 verses 6 and 7.

But let him ask in faith with no doubting. For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that you receive anything from the Lord.

And twelfth, and finally, at least in my summation of those who God will not hear, is those who are proud of heart.

James 4, 6 says, But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud. But gives grace to the humble. Now, none of these texts express the point explicitly.

But I think it is safe to see the aforementioned list as characterizing an unbeliever. One who is outside the faith.

[5 : 53] This is not to say that God cannot hear the prayers of those outside the faith. But there is a particular listening to and answering of the prayers of those who are in Christ.

And so we want to be very careful at this point, don't we? I looked for a good Baptist definition of prayer.

Historical Baptist definition of prayer. But I couldn't find one. Please share it with me if you can find it. So I went to the Westminster Larger Catechism, as we sometimes do. And question 178 is, What is prayer?

This is the Larger Catechism's answer. Answer. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God in the name of Christ, by the help of His Spirit, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.

I think that is a fantastic definition of prayer. I hope this morning that you know your great need of God's presence and power in your life.

[7 : 07] And therefore, your great need to pray. To plead your cause and the cause of others before our God.

So let's consider how we ought to pray to the right God rightly. Our text this morning is Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 and 10.

However, I would like to read a bit more for the broader context. So we will read Matthew chapter 6, verse 5 through 13. Before I begin reading in verse 5, let me remind you, beloved.

This is God's word to us, written for His glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Matthew chapter 6, verse 5 and following. Jesus said, And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

[8 : 14] Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think 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 in temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Before I make any points from our text this morning, I would first like to draw your attention to the little word in verse 9, like. I am not against the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

[9 : 22] Absolutely. I have participated in this. You have probably been to a place where the Lord's Prayer is recited together. The recitation of Scripture is always to be commended.

It is a wonderful thing to have this prayer memorized and to be able to say it. But I do not believe that Jesus is trying to give us material for our corporate liturgy.

He is instead modeling a pattern for us to pray by. He does not say, pray this.

He says, pray then like this. That we would see the attitude and the intentions of the Lord's Prayer and therefore model our praying after it.

We can become over-reductionary at this point. And some do this very thing where they would say, look, we're not supposed to heap up empty phrases. We're merely meant to say this thing that Jesus said.

[10:29] We have the example in the Scripture of Jesus spending all night in prayer. And I am confident that He did not repeat these verses over and over and over again.

So pray then like this. That is a very important distinction for us to consider. So first point for this morning is pray like Jesus, our Father in heaven.

This is the first half of verse 9. Our Father in heaven. First, let's think about the phrase, our Father. Jesus tells us that our prayer should begin with the recognition that God is our Father. Beloved, this is an astounding truth.

It is a truth that I hope is true of each and every person in my hearing. Prayer that is acceptable to God begins with a positional reality that God is our Father.

[11:38] If you have been saved by Christ, then you have been adopted into the family of God. You have Jesus as your brother, God as your Father, and all the blessed access to Him that comes with your adoption.

We have relational intimacy with the Creator of heaven and earth. Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 6.

Because you are sons. And ladies, I want to always remind you that it was appropriate for them to write in this way. Sons received all the inheritance.

And you can think that's unfair of their day. But they're trying to communicate something in your day. Ladies, you're also sons receiving inheritance. So read it in that light. Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father.

What a thing this is that having been adopted by God in Christ, we get to cry out to Him, Our Father.

[12:52] John Calvin and the Christian Institutes in comments on Galatians chapter 4 verse 6 wrote the following. John Calvin is a scary name to you.

Read John Calvin. Wealth of richness for your soul. He wrote this, and I quote, With what confidence would anyone address God as Father?

Who would break forth into such rashness as to claim for himself the honor of a son of God unless we had been adopted as children of grace in Christ?

But because the narrowness of our hearts cannot comprehend God's boundless favor, not only is Christ the pledge and guarantee of our adoption, but He moves the Spirit as witness to us of the same adoption, through whom with free and full voice we may cry, Abba, Father, our Father, who art in heaven.

What an astounding reality it is that we are given the permission to call God our Father. And God is very pleased to have us call Him our Father because it is consistent with His purpose that we do so.

[14:16] Paul again, this time in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 5 wrote, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.

So when we call God our Father, we are recognizing His boundless mercy and grace to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

This is a profound title to utter to God in our prayers, and it is the basis for our confidence in approaching Him. In my very imperfect fathering, I always want my children to know that they have full access to me.

And this just isn't always true, is it? My very physical presence is not always with my children, and they can put in a phone call if I'm not in a meeting and can take it at that time.

Sometimes when I'm home, I'm not always mentally present. Those of you with children know the yeah-yaz or that's cool, and sometimes I don't know what I agree to when my children are speaking to me.

[15:28] So in my very imperfect fathering, I want it to be true, though. I want my kids to know that I love them and I care for them, and they can come to me with each and every little thing. But God, our father, the perfect father, is never unavailable.

He's never too preoccupied, never unable to hear our petitions, and never lacks the power to do something about them.

This is astounding. This is astounding. On your bulletin this morning is a bit of a quotation from J.I. Packer from a really wonderful book he wrote called Knowing God.

And I'm going to read what's on your bulletin, and I'm going to read a bit beyond it, but it was just too much to fit on your bulletin this morning. I have been mulling over this quotation quite a bit over the past weeks.

He wrote this. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father.

[16:50] So get in and really try to understand of a person how much he understands his position as a son or daughter and having God as father.

And I would encourage you to take some time really considering that for yourself. What does it mean for me to be a child of God? What does it mean for him to be my father?

How does that shape my thinking about who I am and who he is and the way I am meant to live in this world and how it is I am to pray?

So I quote further from J.I. Packer in Knowing God. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the old, everything that is distinctly Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God.

[18:02] Father is the Christian name for God. Isn't that beautiful? So Jesus tells us our prayer should begin with the recognition that God is our father.

And we should ask that question of ourselves this morning. Am I a child of God? Is God my father? Have I been adopted into the family of God?

And this is a work of God on our behalf. It happens by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. If there's any prompting in you this morning to repent of your sin and turn to Christ, I would encourage, I would plead with you to do so today, that you might call God your father.

But we're not just to pray our father, but also our father in heaven. Our father in heaven. I believe that we are to pray our father in heaven, lest we become too chummy.

It's the best word I could think of there. Too chummy with the one who created heaven and earth and all that is in them. Have you seen the Jesus is my homeboy shirts?

[19:20] Kind of hope that trend has died out. Out. Our father in heaven. Lest we forget that he is God and we are not.

We should be careful that we do not become overly casual in our prayer. Some will say prayer is just talking to God. Yes and no.

At the same time. We ought to approach God with boldness as his children, but also with reverence and awe.

Right? Boldness as his children. Our father. But also with reverence and awe in heaven. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 28 verse 29 says, Let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire.

I hope that you can see the very careful balance that Jesus is teaching us in beginning our prayer with this attitude of our father in heaven.

[20:35] Allow me to read you an example. This text is from the Valley of Vision, which is a collection of Puritan prayers. If you're not familiar with them, I hope you will make yourself familiar with them.

Listen to the beauty of this prayer. Eternal Father, it is amazing love that you have sent your son to suffer in my stead.

That you have added the spirit to teach, comfort, guide. That you have allowed the ministry of angels to wall me round. All heaven subserves the welfare of a poor worm.

Permit your unseen servants to be ever active on my behalf and to rejoice when grace expands in me. Suffer them never to rest until my conflict is over and I stand victorious on salvation's shore.

Grant that my proneness to evil, deadness to good, resistance to your spirit's motions may never provoke you to abandon me. May my hard heart awake your pity, not your wrath.

[21:46] And if the enemy gets an advantage through my corruption, let it be seen that heaven is mightier than hell. That those for me are greater than those against me.

Arise to my help in richness of covenant blessings. Keep me feeding in the pastures of your strengthening word. Searching scripture to find you there.

If my waywardness is visited with a scourge, enable me to receive correction meekly. To bless the reproving hand. To discern the motive of rebuke.

To respond promptly and do the first work. Let all your fatherly dealings make me a partaker of your holiness. Grant that in every fall I may sink lower on my knees.

And that when I rise it may be to loftier heights of devotion. May my every cross be sanctified. Every loss be gained. Every denial a spiritual advantage.

[22 : 46] Every dark day a light of the Holy Spirit. Every night of trial a song. Amen. Now, I don't intend to read that that your prayers would sound like this.

We use much simpler language in our day. And that's entirely okay. The song that was sung during the offering had lots of layered metaphor in it.

And some of you may have been scratching your head. What is all this wooden nails talk? I'm trying to catch the picture of what it means. And it keeps switching on me. And that's the beauty of beautiful language.

Right? That we would have our minds pressed in this way. So reading old prayers like this can be a help to us in that way. But we are not called to pray as the Puritans prayed in word form.

But in attitude. I hope you picked up some of the balance that was struck from this Puritan prayer. This Our Father in Heaven.

[23 : 52] This prayer for the loving kindness of God struck against His holiness. His demand placed on the life of one of His followers.

We ought to approach God in this very same way. Our Father in Heaven. When we pray together. When we meet in this way. We want to model for you praying. We do it better at times than others. And I would include myself in that.

Sometimes we kind of wander into our prayers. And give them very little thought out in advance.

But when we pray together. We want to elevate these qualities of God to us.

Begin our prayers in this way. You'll hear me often pray Father God. That is my recognition of this. Our Father in Heaven. Seeing Him both as Father and as God.

[24 : 57] We want to model that for you in our praying. I would like to make one additional note on this phrase. This point. Our Father in Heaven. Notice that the prayers of God's children begin with.

Our Father. Our Father. It's a plural pronoun being used here. I believe that the meaning of the use of the plural pronoun our is layered.

It's got some multiple meanings to it. But certainly in our corporate prayers. It is proper for the one who is leading the prayer. To pray for us. On our behalf. Even as we join in the prayer.

We ought to use plural pronouns. As we're praying together. One person voicing the prayer. And others joining in that. But I also think there is a further meaning.

Jesus has just instructed times of secret prayer. Has He not? So in the context.

[26 : 03] What does the Our Father mean in your private prayers? I suggest to you that Jesus intends that we not forget.

Even in our moments of solitude. That God has saved a people. He has certainly saved you. If you can cry out to Him.

Our Father. But more importantly than that. He has saved a people. It seems to me good. That whenever we pray.

We recognize that God is the Father of the Church. Global. He is bigger than just our day. And while He is concerned with my affairs.

And with yours. His purpose in the world extends far beyond us. And this thought leads me to my second point.

[27 : 01] So firstly we're going to pray like Jesus. Our Father in heaven. Second. Pray like Jesus. Hallowed. Be your name. The last half of verse.

Nine. Hallowed. Be your name. The first petition of Jesus. The first thing that He has asked of His heavenly Father.

Is not for Himself. But that God's name. Would be hallowed. To hallow something is to honor it. As holy. So Jesus asks first and foremost. That God's glory. Would be known. That His praise would be.

Some. This is His first petition. The first thing that He asks. Of His heavenly Father. That His heavenly Father would. Be. Known.

[27 : 59] That people would behold Him. As He is. And praise Him. For who. He is. Beloved. If only we would begin our prayers.

In this way. I believe. That we would pray. Much. Differently. And I don't just mean reciting. Hallowed. Be your name. And then launching into whatever it is. That's present.

On your mind. But coming to prayer. With this attitude. Our Father in Heaven. Puts the Gospel. At the very forefront. Of our thinking.

I was once an enemy of God. I have now been called. His friend. I was once a person. Without a people. Now I have been grafted in. To the family. Of God.

And that turns us. To say. Oh. That your name. Would be praised. As it should. Amongst all. Peoples. If we would begin.

[28 : 53] With a great concern. For God's name. To be honored. This would inform. How we pray. For all things. That concern us. This would lift. Our gaze.

Beyond the troubles. Of today. To a more glorious. Reality. Of who God is. And how he is working. In the world. I want to show you this.

As an example. From the life. Of Moses. So I want you to mark. Matthew chapter 6. I think we are going to get back into it. If we have time. So mark. Matthew chapter 6. With a finger.

Or a handy ribbon. Or a. Digital bookmark. Of some kind. And turn with me. To Exodus chapter 33. This is why I still like my hard copy Bible.

Because it is really hard to. Put your finger. In an iPhone. Someone. Someone after this.

[29 : 59] Gathering is going to show me. How cool it is. How you can mark stuff. In a digital Bible. I just know it. We are going to read.

Verses 11. Through. 17. Of Exodus chapter 33. Now. This is after. Moses has come down. From Mount Sinai. He has got the. The tablets.

That the Ten Commandments. Have been carved in by God. He discovers the Israelites.

Worshipping the golden calf. He destroys. The Ten Commandments. He is so angry. That he breaks them.

But this is before. He has gone back. And gotten the new. Tablets. This is this. In between time. This. This episode.

Happening. Exodus chapter. 33. I begin reading. Verse 11. Thus the Lord. Used to speak to Moses. Face to face. As a man. Speaks. To his friend.

[30 : 53] When Moses. Turned again. Into the camp. His assistant. Joshua. The son of none. A young man. Would not depart. From the tent. Moses said. To the Lord. See.

You say to me. Bring up this people. But you have not. Let me know. Whom. You will send. With me. Yet you have said. I know you by name.

And you have also. Found favor. In my sight. Now therefore. If I have found favor. In your sight. Please show me. Now your ways. That I may know you.

In order to find favor. In your sight. Consider too. That this nation. Is your people. And so. Moses. In the opening here.

Of his prayer. Is praying God's word. Back to him. God is very pleased with this. We see a pattern of it. Throughout. The scriptures. He says. You have said. Show me how this. Is going to come.

[31 : 48] To pass. How is it. That people are going to know. That I. And your people. Have found favor. In your sight. Remember what they've just done. Right. How are they.

To know. And God replies. In verse 14. And he said. My presence. Will go. With you. And I. Will give you. Rest. This is his response. To that. My presence. Will go. With. You. Singular pronoun. And I. Will give you.

Rest. Listen to Moses. Reply. Verse 15. And he. Said to him. Moses. Said to God. If your presence. Will not. Go. With.

Me. It seems like he. Missed the point. All together. But. Moses intention. Is to stay. With the people of God. If your presence.

[32 : 42] Will not. Go with me. Do not. Bring. Us. Up. From here. And he goes back. To the plural. Pronoun. Right. I'm staying with. The Israelites.

If your presence. Will not. Go with me. Do not. Bring. Us. Up. From. Here. Number 16. Is key. For how. Shall it be known. That I have found favor.

In your sight. I. And. Your. People. Is it not. And you're going. With us. So that we are distinct. I. And. Your.

People. From. Every. Other. People. On the face. Of the earth. What is Moses. Praying. Here. God. You've made. Promises. To make us. A distinct. People. To show your favor. To us. What is he concerned about? About himself. God has already said to him.

[33 : 38] I will go with you. This is not a. Moses. Centered. Prayer. This is an altogether. God. Centered. Prayer. Moses says.

Our father. In heaven. Hallowed. Hallowed. Be your name. You have said. You would do a thing. With the people. You have delivered us.

From Egypt. If you abandon us. Now. How. Will people know. Who you. Are. Catch that. Verse 17. And the Lord said to Moses. This very thing. That you have spoken. And I. Will. Do. For you have found favor. In my sight. And I know you. By name.

I would strongly encourage you. To read the rest of the account. It was so hard to stop. At verse 17. But. To make. The point. For this morning. Right. Moses models for us. This kind. Of praying.

[34 : 34] His primary concern. Is the praise. Of God. Amongst. Peoples. As he is the God. Of this. People. And we ought to pray.

In the very. Same way. We should pray like Jesus. Our father. In heaven. We should pray like Jesus. Hallowed.

Be your name.