

Our Father in Heaven: The Lord's Prayer—part 1 of 6

Matthew 6:9-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Lord's Prayer

⁹ "Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father, who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

Introduction

A Bible trivia: Did you know that you can say a beautiful prayer without the mentioning of 'God?' Not even once? Look at today's text.

For the next six Sundays, we are going to learn about a prayer, commonly known as the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that the Lord Jesus has taught us to pray.

Contents

This morning, part 1 of 6, let's think about how we start our prayer saying, 'Our Father Who Art in Heaven.'

Our Father: Typically, we would begin our prayers saying either 'O, Lord,' or 'Dear God.' In fact, that's how, I believe, the disciples of Jesus would've begun their prayers, too. So, when Jesus instructed them to call God 'Our Father,' it must have been a surprise to them. It must have seemed a very unconventional, even radical, way to start the prayer.

A little bit of information on how radical Jesus was in His time. In those days, ordinary Jews would not dare to call God 'Father.' Up until that time, since the time of Moses, they often called their human ancestors 'father(s)' such as Abraham (Matthew 3:9, John 8:41), Isaac (Romans 9:10), Jacob (John 4:12), or David (Luke 1:32, Mark 11:10). They also would call the LORD '**God of our fathers,**' but seldom called Him 'Our Father.' *Never call God the Father, they were strictly reminded by their teachers, because it makes you either too*

high above everyone else or too close to God. Know your place: you're human. He is divine. Actually, calling God 'Father' in such an affectionate term as Jesus did was considered by the religious leaders a blasphemy against God—that deserves the penalty of death by stoning.

I looked up in the Old Testament to find out how often the people of Israel called the LORD their God 'Father': three times. The first one who ever **possibly** called God his 'Father' was King David. There's no actual evidence that David did, though: rather it was God Himself who gave David a permission to call Him thus: *He (David) shall cry unto me (God), Thou art my **father**, my **God**, and the rock of my salvation* (Psalm 89: 26, KJV).

Prophet Isaiah actually called God 'our Father' in his prayer: *For **You are our Father**, though Abraham does not know us. And Israel does not recognize us. **You, O LORD, are our Father**, ...* (Isaiah 63:16, NASB).

The third one who called God 'Father' was Prophet Malachi. He In his prophecy to his people, Malachi lamented that God's people treacherously dealt with each other saying: *Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?* (Malachi 2:10).

Besides these instances, no one in the entire Old Testament ever called God 'Father.' No wonder the people of God would restrain themselves from calling God their Father. They showed the utmost respect when it comes down to the name of God.

Well, that tradition was about to change when Jesus instructed His disciples to start calling God 'Our Father.' At that very moment, the disciples might have thought to themselves, *Well, Teacher, You can call Him Abba Father* (Mark 14:36), *because You are intimate with Him. But we? No way.*

Listen. Here's the reason why we begin our prayers with two words: **Our Father**. These two words give the reason to God to listen to our cries. Father listens to the cries of His children. These two words, "Our Father," also remind us that **prayer is not a religion** (cf. the older son in Luke 15:29). **It is a relationship** (cf. the younger son in Luke 15:12, 18, 21).

When we say, Our Father, it puts us in the right relationship with God. These two words remind us of who God is, who we are, and to whom we pray: He is our father (holy and righteous—John 17:11, 25), we are His children, and we are praying to our Father in Heaven! By instructing us to start calling God 'Our Father,' Jesus elevated our status from a sinner to a saint: from a commoner to a royal child of God, and from a stranger to God's adopted child.

It gets even better. Later on, after His resurrection, Jesus ultimately promoted us to the same status as His: *My Father Your Father, My God Your God* (John 20:17). From then on, every writer of the New Testament was inspired and instructed by the Holy Spirit to boldly make a claim that God is their Father, Abba (the most affectionate term). E.g. Philip called God Father (John 14:8). Peter the Apostle did, too (Acts 2:33). Paul the Apostle called God, Abba (Galatians 4:6). We the believers in Christ today also call God ‘Abba, Father’ because we are His adopted children: *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father* (Romans 8:15, KJV).

Jesus called His Father, Abba all the time: in good times (John 11:45) and even in moments of distress (Mark 14:36) (e.g., Luke 2:49—the 12-year-old Jesus told his earthly parents that he had to be ‘in His Father’s House’). Later, in the Gospel of John alone, Jesus called God ‘My Father’ over a hundred times.

Jesus called God in Heaven Abba, Father, all the time. So did His disciples. So should we God’s adopted children in Christ. In good times and bad times, let’s call Him, Abba Our Father. All the time. In prayer.

One more thing on being God’s child: all peoples on earth are invited to be children of God (being created in the image of God doesn’t mean everyone is automatically a child of God). *To be a child of God one must believe in Jesus.* “to them (who received Jesus) He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

Anyone can recite the Lord’s Prayer and call God, Abba, Father until his face is blue. Yet, it doesn’t automatically turn him into God’s child. **Faith in Jesus does.** For instance, one day, Jesus was engaged in a discussion with some Jews who claimed that God was their father. To them, He said: *Your father is the devil* (John 8:44). Wait a minute. Why did Jesus call them, the Jews, the children of the devil? Didn’t they believe in God? Of course, they did. Why, then? Because they rejected Jesus and refused to acknowledge Him as the Messiah (John 8:45). The same thing goes with anyone today who refuses to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

Once again: what makes a person child of God? Listen to Jesus’ word from His own mouth: only if you believe that I came from the Father and if you love Me by keeping My commandments (John 16:27, 14:21). If a person fails this test, s/he is not a child of God. In doubt of what I just said? Check it out yourself what God’s Word says.

In Heaven: What is Heaven? Simply put, it is God’s abode. It is also the eternal home for the believers in Christ. Heaven is our final destination that God has prepared for us

(Hebrews 11:16). It is the counterpart of Hell. God has designed and built it (Hebrews 11:10). It is the kingdom where He is King (Matthew 5:16), and we His children are citizens therein (Philippians 3:20). In Heaven, we will reign with Christ for eternity (Revelation 22:5). Of course, there will be angels with us.

Who enters Heaven? Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27, 22:14). Only those who are born again (John 3, esp. v. 15). Nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood (Revelation 21:27). I will elaborate on this later.

Now, here's the list of **the things we will see** in Heaven. First, **the tree of life** that will bear twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and its leaves will heal the nations (Revelation 22:2). Next, we will have **the New Jerusalem**, the holy city that is made of precious stones (its foundations and walls) and whose streets are made of pure gold (Revelation 21:18-21). It will have twelve gates. Also, there will be **the river of the water of life** that flows from the throne of God through the middle of the street of the celestial city (Revelation 22:1-2).

What about **the things we won't have** in Heaven? First of all, there will be **no sea, no light of lamp** (no electricity), **no sun or moon** (God is the light), and **no night**, because God Himself and His glory will illuminate the city (Revelation 22:5, 21:23). There will be **no Temple**, because God will be the Temple (Revelation 21:22). There will be **no closed gates. No curse** (Revelation 22:3), **no tears, no death, no sorrow, no crying or pain** will be there, either (Revelation 21:1-4). **No more Satan. No more devils or evil spirits.** They will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 19:20). There will be **no people of low character** (the Bible calls them "dogs" --cf. Philippians 3:2), **no cowards, no sorcerers, no fornicators, no murderers, no idolaters, and no liars** (Revelation 21:8, 22:15).

Now, **a word of caution.** Some of us have heard or read about Heaven through different sources (books, movies, YouTube, personal experiences, and so on). You must test all those stories and testimonies against the Bible, God's Word, the final authority on this matter. It is your Christian duty to test the spirits you encounter (1 John 4:1). If the stories are in agreement with the Bible, then keep them. If not, reject them, because you don't want to establish your faith on something that is attested false against God's Word.

The real question is whether we will be there or not, right? There is only one condition we must satisfy: **Our sins to be washed with Jesus' blood (Revelation 22:14).** Our sins only can be forgiven by God through Jesus. It is Jesus' precious blood that enters our names in the Book of Life. That means to be born again. That means, to live a life holy and

righteous before God. That means, we sincerely *believe Jesus as our **Savior and obey Him as our Lord.***

Be careful here. Believing in Jesus never means a mere intellectual agreement with what Jesus has done on the cross. Even the evil spirits believe that (James 2:19). Rather, **faith in Christ must include sincere repentance of your sins, living a life worthy of God's name and keeping God's commandments (Matthew 7:21).** It would be very foolish of us to assume that God will get us into Heaven with our words of confession in Jesus alone when we never keep His commandments in our daily lives. Those nominal believers (B.I.N.O.s---Believers-In-Name-Only) will be disillusioned and sore disappointed in the Last Day.

Conclusion

Remember: prayer is not a religion. It is a relationship. You speak your heart to your Heavenly Father. So, next time you pray, begin your prayer with 'Our Father in Heaven': He is your loving Father and you're His child. He is delighted to see you in prayer and have you in Heaven forever with Him. Amen.