

**Advanced Bible Correspondence Course
Lesson 46 – The Lord's Prayer**

The first three petitions

In Luke 11:1, we read that the disciples asked the Lord Jesus: "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" The Lord then tells them how they must and may pray. In the Lord's Days which follow we will learn about this. The Lord's Prayer will be dealt with in them. This prayer is divided as follows: it begins with the Addressee, then the six petitions, and at the end there is the praise or eulogy, followed by the word "Amen."

Lessons 46-49 deal with the first three petitions. In these three petitions we do not yet ask for anything for ourselves, but all are focused on the honour of God. This teaches us that our prayers should not be lists of wishes.

LORD'S DAY 46

Q. 120. WHY HATH CHRIST COMMANDED US TO ADDRESS GOD THUS: "OUR FATHER"?

A. THAT IMMEDIATELY, IN THE VERY BEGINNING OF OUR PRAYER, HE MIGHT EXCITE IN US A CHILDLIKE REFERENCE FOR, AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD, WHICH IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR PRAYER: NAMELY, THAT GOD IS BECOME OUR FATHER IN CHRIST, AND WILL MUCH LESS DENY US WHAT WE ASK OF HIM IN TRUE FAITH, THAN OUR PARENTS WILL REFUSE US EARTHLY THINGS. (A).

(A) MATTHEW 7:9-11, LUKE 11: 11-13

A perfect prayer

The Lord's Prayer is a perfect prayer. That cannot be said of one single prayer of any of God's children. It is perfect because the Son of God Himself has prescribed it. And what He has prescribed can only be perfect. Furthermore, this prayer includes everything that must be contained in a true prayer. There is not a single word too many or too few. We cannot think of a single need of which the Lord's Prayer does not speak. There is no need that we may have that is not included in the Lord's Prayer. God's honour and the temporal and eternal welfare of the person praying and that of his neighbour are found in it.

The prayer begins with an Addressee. It is not just cried out into an empty void, but it has an Addressee. That is proper. It is addressed to the only true God. In one of the penitential psalms, we read: *“Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord”* (Psalm 130:1). It is important to realize that we are speaking to God.

The most tender Name

The Lord Jesus chose the most tender name which may be used when calling upon God: “Our Father.” What tenderness and intimacy this indicates! “Childlike reverence”, answer 120 says. This means: loving, respect, a holy diffidence combined with upright love. It contains the same meaning as the warm expression “the fear of the Lord,” which we meet with in the Word of God. It is coupled with a heartfelt confidence in God and a sincere aversion to sin. These things lie at the bottom of our heart when we may pray truthfully. This is seen by God, for we must never forget that God looks into the heart of the person who prays.

How is it possible that a sinner may address the majestic and holy God as Father? Is the devil not his father by nature? Yes, but when a person is regenerated, he receives a different Father. Christ becomes his eldest Brother and God’s children become his brothers and sisters. Paul said *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26). Such a person cannot fathom such a privilege, and will, especially when his faith is still weak, just whisper “Father.” Many carelessly say the name of “Father,” but let us remember that outside of Christ, the Father is our Judge, who will not overlook any sin.

Childlike reverence and childlike confidence

God’s child does not have this childlike reverence and childlike confidence of himself. It is necessary that God put this in his or her heart. That is why we find the word “excite” in the answer. Only God can do this. How blessed are those who may pray in this way and in doing so look to Christ’s satisfaction only.

What does this confidence refer to? It refers to everything we need. God’s child may pour out his heart before God, like a child before his father. This is what Hannah, the mother of Samuel, did. She said: *“I have poured out my soul before the LORD”* (1Samuel 1:15). So honest and trusting, believing that the heavenly Father listens and will give what he or she needs and will withhold that which is not good for him or her.

The latter can be judged best by the heavenly Father. What safety this holds! What rest this gives! David could say: *“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved”* (Psalm 62:1-2). This confidence may be there immediately, says our answer: as soon as we close our eyes and fold our hands.

Q121. WHY IS IT HERE ADDED, “WHICH ART IN HEAVEN”?

A. LEST WE SHOULD FORM ANY EARTHLY CONCEPTIONS OF GOD’S HEAVENLY MAJESTY (A), AND THAT WE MAY EXPECT FROM HIS ALMIGHTY POWER ALL THINGS NECESSARY FOR SOUL AND BODY (B).

(A) JEREMIAH 23: 23-24, ACTS 17 24-25,27; (B) ROMANS 10;12.

The Father in heaven

The address of the perfect prayer does not only begin with “Our Father.”

Something more is added to it. Why the addition “which art in Heaven”? There is a reason for it. No matter how childlike, dependently, and tenderly a child of God may also associate with his heavenly Father, he may never become inappropriately familiar in his prayer. We may not think in an earthly way of heavenly majesty of God. Childlike openness may never change into inappropriate boldness.

We have it in our veins to think in an earthly way of the Lord. In Psalm 50:21 we read that the Lord says: *“Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”* The person who learns to know God begins to realize that He is the holy, glorious, and majestic God in heaven, and that he cannot bow deeply enough before Him. Think of Abraham. He said: *Behold now, I have taken upon me* (have been so bold) *to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes*” (Genesis 18:12).

God’s glory

There is, however, another reason for the addition “which art in heaven.” The fact that God is in heaven should not only make us reverent, but also expectant. In heaven God’s glory and power are so clearly seen. God the Father also has all power on earth. He is able to do all things. He who prays may expect that He will provide all things necessary. All things necessary! What are these necessary things? They are everything we need for body and soul, but not anything we want. An earthly father would be foolish if he gave his child everything he asked. We often like to have things which are not beneficial to us.

Questions:

1. *Why do we call the Lord’s Prayer the perfect prayer?*

2. *What is “childlike reverence”?*

3. *For what reasons is added: “Which art in heaven”?*

4. *What are the necessities of the body? (see also Lesson 45b Question. 118)*

5. *What are the necessities of the soul? (see also Lesson 145b, Question 118)*

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: "To a Friend, asking what God was."

Is there a man, whose daring hand
Can number every grain of sand?
Can count the drops that fill the sea?
And tell how many stars there be?
Who shall presume to comprehend
Infinity that knows no end?
Who shall set bounds to boundless power?
Restrain Omnipotence, or lower
Eternity to one poor hour?
Who shall disclose his Maker's plan?
Or dare his secret will to scan?
Shall feeble, short-lived, sordid man?
Believe me, friend, thou canst no more
The vast designs of God explore,
Than thy short arm can reach the sky,
Or turn the spacious ocean dry.
None but perfection such as His
Can know the Almighty as He is;
His searchless glory can't be brought
Adapted to a mortal's thought;
His Majesty we can't discern,
His Attributes we cannot learn,
Till He removes the fleshy glass,
And shows His glory face to face.
Vain is the wisdom, vain the skill,
That strives to take away the veil;
That searches every mystery,
While clouded with mortality.

Taken from: "Contemplations" by A.M. Toplady