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Prayer in the Name of the Lord Jesus

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret shall recompense thee. And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:5-10).

It is that last part of our Lord's instructions that I feel is to engage our attention now.

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done...".

May I repeat something that we have said so often, but to forget which, means to leave a gap and to make for weakness in the application and value of what is here. I refer to the fact that, whenever we are reading or listening to anything which the Lord Jesus said in the days of His flesh here on the earth, we are not by any means getting what He meant, and to take it in itself means that we are unable to know His meaning. He Himself enunciated the truth, the fact, and the law, that it required for those who listened to Him in those days, in their disposition, a future state of things, in order

that they should understand what He was saying. That is, He pointed on to the dispensation of the Holy Spirit's presence as an inward reality and illuminator. This would be the time when they would understand what He was saying to them and that they would not understand until then. He said that, made it very clear, and of course it is borne out with overwhelming evidence that it was true, that they did not understand, and not until after His resurrection did they enter into the meaning and the value of all the things that He had said.

But the fuller meaning of that is this: that He did but speak things which contained an unrevealed fulness. What He was saying was like a seed, and you never know exactly what is in a seed, and certainly you never enter into the enjoyment and value of what is in a seed until it has developed and grown. You may see seeds, but they do not convey very much to you, though you may believe that there is something there, or you may be told that there is something there. A seedsman may have his window full of seeds and he may have in his window a description of what those seeds are and what they will produce, but it is not until you have planted the seed and it has grown and you see the full bloom that you really know in a living, fruitful, profitable and enjoyable way what you have been told about those seeds.

Now, the gospels are like that. The Lord Jesus therein says a great many things which are quite true. He tells us of their value and we have reason to believe that He speaks the truth, but we do not really, any more than the disciples did, come to the living enjoyment of what He said until the Holy Spirit quickens us and the Seed in us, and it grows, and when we get past the gospels into the other parts of the New Testament, we get out of the realm of the seeds into the realm of full growth, full blossom, and we know then what was in the seeds that the Lord Jesus dropped.

So it is here with every fragment in the gospels and it applies to this prayer or this model, this bringing together into a brief, comprehensive statement of things. There is a wealth and a world of fulness which is not understood or appreciated until we have all the rest of the revelation by the Holy Spirit after the Lord Jesus had left this earth. And men make a fatal mistake when they take what they term 'the teaching of Jesus' and isolate it and seek to apply it to life and to things here on this earth. Now, I will not go further with that, but that is being done, and the repetition even of this prayer continuously as a form is an instance of how a thing can be taken up in itself as something in itself, shut up in itself, and used interminably to no living profit.

How much of all the reciting of what is called 'The Lord's Prayer' is of real spiritual value and profit? And that is a question that is quite permissible. We want something more than this formula. Well, that is the thing that it is important always to remember when we are reading in the gospels - that it is something shut up and we have got to look further on for what is in it. So, when we read short, precise, concise clauses like these, we have in our hands a seed, a germ, capable of immense expansion and far reaching significance and it is not until, by the Holy Spirit's illumination, we see what that means, what has come as fuller revelation, that the thing becomes of real value and living profit.

"Our Father". Take that as in the gospels, isolate it, and make a general application of it, and you have missed the way and fallen into a snare which is going to bind you and hold you and limit you for ever.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, Thy name be hallowed". For a great mass of people (that is no exaggeration) for a great mass of people that 'hallowed be thy name' or 'Thy name be hallowed'

means nothing more than an attitude of reverence, an assumed attitude, a posture and mentality of reverencing God as Almighty God. It means that - that may be good, but that is not enough.

"Thy kingdom". Well, where shall we begin and where shall we hope to end when we begin to tackle the Kingdom of God? "Thy kingdom come" - what a lot there is in that - the coming of the Kingdom of God.

"Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth". You see, we are out in immensities. I say we need all the rest of the Divine revelation through the advent of the Holy Spirit to give us the meaning and value of these very short phrases. I am not going to take up all the rest of Divine revelation and open up these things in any attempt at fulness, I just want to come on to the statements themselves with one or two remarks about them.

The first is this. It is the Lord Jesus who is giving this instruction, who is the Teacher. He is bringing out something, out from God, out from heaven, out from eternity, bringing out something for men. They are getting their enlightenment, their instruction, their knowledge, through Him. He is the focal centre of all this which comes out from God, from heaven, and all this which is the reach-out of men. In Him, man's need and God's provision is centred and focussed, and He therefore becomes the mediator and the interpreter, and that is the basic and full truth and principle of the utterances.

What I mean is this: that all these things are taken up in Christ Himself personally, and you can never enter into their value merely as things said by Him. You must remember this. This I regard as the blow at a very great deal that has developed in recent years which has made even the New Testament and what is called 'the teaching of Jesus' of none effect. It has been taken as teaching and even the teaching of Jesus, and, as the teaching of Jesus, it has been formed into a system for human life and it is all ineffective and valueless. It does not work, and it is a vain attempt to make good out of the teaching of Jesus.

You come up against that again and again. You come up against men who say, 'Yes, I believe in the teaching of Jesus. I believe in the teaching of the gospels. I accept the teaching of Jesus. It is the grandest teaching, it is the finest conception, it is the most wonderful truth', but there is no dynamic in their relationship therewith. There is nothing which really is of a transforming nature and power, and it does not represent a working testimony and it just aborts the whole thing for which Christ came. It is a terrible snare.

Now I speak largely, or to some extent, to my younger friends who will meet this. We have all met it and we just find that that thing holds us up. What are we going to do with it? These people who believe in the teaching of Jesus are very nice people. I remember having a long talk with George Haddon Smith, the famous wrestler. I was talking to him about the Lord, and I went on and on about the Lord Jesus and he went on with me all the time, and he said, 'Yes, I believe in the Lord Jesus. I think Jesus is the most wonderful man that ever lived, the most wonderful teacher. I accept everything that Jesus taught, and Jesus is always a great inspiration in my life. He is my model.' I tried to get on further, and he went on all the way, and I was feeling around. It was a great many years ago, and I had not the experience then that I have now. I was a comparatively young man, and I thought, 'How am I going to get this fellow? I am quite sure he is not saved. Where is the point?' He went with me all the way with Jesus until I reached the point of the Lord Jesus having, by a definite crisis in our history, become an inward, living reality by which a new birth had taken place. Ah, no! Then I found the end of his journey. He said, 'No, I cannot go with you there. I go with you all the way

with Jesus and His teaching as a great reality in my life, but, when you come to that - no, I cannot go any further.'

You see what I want to get at - and it is not just theory or technique. It is something of immense practical value that it is in the very *Person* of the Lord Jesus that all these words are taken up and made living. Let me explain that by breaking up this part of the prayer.

"Our Father"

"Our Father". Now, you know the people who believe in the teaching of Jesus will accept that. They have got a sort of theory that we are all the offspring of God, we all are children of God, God is our Father; they believe in the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man. We are all the family, we all came from God. Yes, but it is not possible to know the meaning of that fragment as the Lord Jesus meant it, only in a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Himself, and that as the risen Christ and not the Jesus of history.

"Our Father". Now Fatherhood, as revealed by the Holy Spirit, is founded and grounded upon resurrection. When He rose from the dead, one of the very first things that came through His lips to His disciples was this, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17). 'To My Father and your Father' - that is an essentially resurrection utterance. And then the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, bears down upon that with this, "...declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Sonship, Father; this relationship is rooted in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, not in His earthly life, not in His earthly teaching, but in His resurrection, because His resurrection sets forth this great fact: that one order of creation has been put out and another order has been brought in, and it is only in that new order that the family truly stands. It is a new creation, it is a new order, it is an entirely new relationship - not of nature, but by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and all the rest of the New Testament bears that out. It all comes down to this: our true, living relationship with God as His children and our right to call Him, "Our Father", is now only on the ground of one whole order of creation having been put away and another entirely other having been brought in which is heavenly, not earthly; which is spiritual, not natural.

"Our Father, which art in heaven" - that can only be entered into by a living personal relationship with a risen, ascended, glorified, heavenly Christ. Our sonship is only in the Son, 'I am the way to the Father'. "*I am the way*" - not, 'I will tell you the way'. That means it is only in Him personally that you can come to the Father. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). This is a matter of what and who Christ is and our relationship to Him, and to talk about having the teaching of Jesus and then in the next breath setting aside the absolute Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus is to put ourselves into an utterly false position and to contradict ourselves.

"Our Father, which art in heaven" - that is, Fatherhood, according to the revelation of the Holy Spirit, is union with the risen Son of God; simple, precise, but that is it. I stress this because it is the foundation of all the rest. It is only those who have the right and are in the position to use that term, "Our Father" - those who stand thus vitally related to the Lord Jesus, those who have come into union with Him as the risen Son of God, those who now know a heavenly relationship with God in Christ - these only are the ones who are to pray and can pray in this way. It is foundational to everything. All our ideas about these other matters will be astray, will be wrong, until this foundational relationship is established: "Our Father which art in heaven".

"Thy Name Be Hallowed"

"Thy name be hallowed". Here again we need Christ to be the interpreter, not only the One Who teaches us phrases, but the One Who *Himself* is the explanation, the meaning, of those phrases. We cannot take any of these things out of relationship with the Lord Himself. "Thy name be hallowed", and when we come to look at it and to think about it, it was the Lord Jesus Himself who hallowed the Name of God. What does it mean, this hallowing; what is it to hallow His Name? You can use other words if you like, "to sanctify His Name". It is the same in its meaning as in the Old Testament: to consecrate, to set apart, to make holy. That is to put the Name of God in its right place, and that right place means at least three things.

It means *the place of glory*, where that Name is glorified. Now listen again to the Lord Jesus. His whole heart desires that the Name of His Father might be glorified. "Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:28). That is hallowing the Name - putting it in the place of glory.

Unto that, it must be put in *the place of uniqueness* where it stands alone by itself as the One Name, the only Name, and then it must be put in the place of perfect and utter separation from evil.

"The Lord knows them that are His. And, Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

The Name of the Lord demands *absolute separation from evil*.

Look at these three things in the Lord Jesus; putting the Name of the Lord into the place of glory. There is no doubt about it that His life and His death, His work, had that effect: to put His Father's Name in the place of glory. The result of the work of the Lord Jesus produced in the heart and in the life of those who were born again and transformed by the Holy Spirit, was that men glorified God. Paul was able to say, "and they glorified God in me" (Gal. 1:24), and you know how in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, it is for that reason, men glorifying God, "who had given such power unto men" (Matt. 9:8), that He was doing this, that He had made such changes. But this is all what the Lord Jesus has done being brought out and borne out in the lives of men by the Holy Spirit so that, looking on those men, there is a spontaneous acknowledgment of God and God's Name is glorified. It is the fruit of the cross of the Lord Jesus. It is the fruit of the presence of the Lord Jesus powerfully in the life that others could look upon believers and say, to some extent at least, 'Praise God for what Christ is. Praise God for what He has done there. Praise God for what He is doing there.' To say, "Praise God!" for anything that is putting the Name of the Lord in the place of glory. "Hallowed be Thy name" is that. It is not taking up a reverential posture and being very pious in your tone and in your demeanour and getting up a religious atmosphere and walking softly into church. No, it is in what you *are* as the result of the work and grace of the Lord Jesus in your own heart; making men glorify God, making men say, 'Praise God for that life, for what He is doing there.' That is hallowing His Name. It is putting it in the place of glory.

The same holds true as to the uniqueness of the Name, putting it into the place of uniqueness - that is, that men have to confess there is only One Who can do that. You have got to attribute that to God; no one else could have done it; that speaks of God and that is the last word about it. That is hallowing the Name. It is bringing everything to God, and putting God and His Name in that peerless place which says that there is none other like that, none other could do that. That is God, and all that you can say about it is that it is God. There is nothing beyond that, it is alone. "Hallowed be Thy

name" - and beloved, that can only come about, so far as we are concerned, by reason of the Lord Jesus Himself having brought us into a living union with the Father, so that we can say, "Our Father, hallowed be Thy Name."

But then there is this further factor which is the challenge also, as well as the statement. It means putting that Name in a place apart from all evil, all iniquity, apart from all other names and all their associations. There are other names which have sought to usurp the place of God. There are other forces in this universe which are seeking to get the name which is above every name. One of the most betraying things in what is going on in this present world situation is that definite, deliberate, cold-blooded statements have been made about the one who is at the heart of this iniquitous thing, that Adolph Hitler is the present Jesus Christ, son of God, Messiah. That has been said and put into print. That betrays the nature of this whole thing that is going on. It has come out from a deep, dense background of iniquity which is seeking to get that place in rivalry with God's Son, and the Name of the Lord means that there is a getting clear of every association with iniquity of every kind. It must, if it is to be unique, have no relationship with any rival element in God's universe. At last God's Name must stand alone in its holiness, for holiness belongs unto the Lord and He is the only really holy One in this universe, therefore His Name is apart from every other name. "Let him that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" because to do otherwise is to contradict that very Name, to be found in a realm of inconsistency with your own language. "Our Father". Are we going to say that? Oh, that makes a demand upon us to depart from iniquity.

You see, this is all done in the Lord Jesus. That is the point. He has taken this up, this hallowing of the Name, and in every way He has brought it into its place of glory. He has brought it into its place of uniqueness and of utter separation from iniquity. It is not just something He has done outwardly and objectively. It has been done *in Him*, He is that. God is glorified in the Son, God is uniquely manifested in the Son, and God, in His perfect holiness or separateness from sin, is revealed in His Son, and therefore to have the Name hallowed, we have got to have the Son. It means a living relationship with Him and thank God that is a basis for faith to rest upon. While it will make its demands upon us and bring us into practical responsibilities, faith in the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour means that the Name of God is glorified and not dishonoured where we are concerned.

"Thy Kingdom Come"

"Thy kingdom come". I am not going to take the same time over each of these remaining fragments as I have taken over the first. I have given the law, the principle, the truth. You can apply it to the others. The Kingdom of God is a state of things. The one word which comprehends the Kingdom of God is *righteousness* - it is a state of things. Now, when men pray, "Thy kingdom come", what are they praying for? An outward condition of felicity, peace and safety, of deliverance from every kind of inconvenience and unpleasantness, difficulty, suffering, misery, sorrow and what is evil and wrong because of its effects? But "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). That is the statement of the Lord Jesus, and how is the Kingdom of God within us? It is Christ Himself in us. Christ is the very embodiment and sum total of the Kingdom of God in its nature and essence. When you get the Lord Jesus universally expressed, you have got the Kingdom of God.

When the Kingdom of God comes in fulness, it will be nothing other than a universal expression of what the Lord Jesus is, and when you and I meet the Lord Jesus in one another, if we do, we meet the Kingdom of God and we do not want anything else. If you should meet the Lord Jesus in me and

I should meet the Lord Jesus in you, the Kingdom of God has come. You keep on that ground of the Lord Jesus, and you are in the Kingdom and you are already enjoying the Kingdom.

Two born again children of God meet, perhaps in a railway compartment. They have never set eyes on one another before. This is the first time they have had any contact of any kind, but there is something in common: the Lord Jesus. And for the first few minutes they are meeting on that ground, that they know the Lord, they love the Lord, they have the Lord in them. Why, they are in the Kingdom of God! Perhaps after the first ten minutes they begin to talk about their denominations, but if they are wise, they will say, 'Let us keep on Kingdom ground.' It demands that for the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God will know nothing of these things which are purely earthly; every distinction goes. The ground is the Lord Jesus as an inward enjoyment - that is the Kingdom of God. "Thy kingdom come". If only people who repeat that week after week and day after day recognised what it means - "Thy kingdom come", that the Lord Jesus is a living reality in my heart, that is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom has come in by Him. He has brought in the Kingdom, and it is what He is that makes the Kingdom.

"Thy kingdom come." A perfectly accurate way of stating that in other language would be - the Lord Jesus, the universal, the indweller of man, as the Kingdom, and it will be - the universal indweller of man, that is the Kingdom for which we pray. It is a personal matter, you see.

"Thy Will Be Done"

"Thy will be done." The Lord Jesus took up the matter of the Will of God, "I come to do Thy will." The Will of God was perfectly accomplished in Him, it was perfected in Him. He is the perfect embodiment and expression of the Will of God, and therefore "Thy will be done" just means Christ as sovereign Lord in the heart. That is a bigger thing than signing the dotted line, 'I make Jesus King'. It is a tremendous thing, an everyday challenge and conflict on that ground of His Kingship going on in us day after day. No day passes without a real battle on this matter of His sovereignty in our hearts, sovereignty over self, over the powers of evil, over the world in our hearts - it is a very practical matter. But "thy will be done" can be all gathered up into that: the Lord Jesus sovereignly within every part of our being, in every interest in our life.

It is Himself; His prayer is Himself. Our prayer is Christ, for God has ordained that nothing of Himself can be apart from His Son where we are concerned. We can have, we can know, nothing of God apart from the Lord Jesus. "No man comes to the Father but by Me."

Now prayer, then, is focussed in the Lord Jesus, and when we use the phrase in prayer - "in the Name of Jesus" - we are only taking up our position upon what the Lord Jesus is as the ground and the focal point of all God's will, God's way, God's intention, God's purpose, God's grace and God's disposition towards us. It is all a matter of the ground of the Lord Jesus, the ground of effectual prayer, and when we pray in the Name, we are praying on the ground of the Person. That is what it means. The Name is the Person. We are praying in that Name, on that ground. We have a triumphant and perfect ground for prayer because the whole thing is already accomplished in Him. The Kingdom is His; the will is perfected forever in Him. The Name is hallowed in Him. The Lord open our understanding and make our meditation of value and profit.