



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Breakdown and Explanation by Martin Luther

Index Page



Background to Luther's Explanation

Most Christians are acquainted with the beautiful and familiar words of the Lord's Prayer, or as it is called in the Roman Catholic Church, the Our Father. However, as with many prayers, poems, or responses which we memorize, it is often easy to recite them without really thinking about them or truly understanding the depth of biblical truth on which they are founded.

In his work entitle Luther's Small Catechism, Dr. Martin Luther digs deeper into the Lord's Prayer, breaking it up into sections that he referred to as an Introduction, seven Petitions (or requests), and a Conclusion. He further provided an explanation for each section, along with additional questions and Bible verses to assist in deepening the readers' understanding. This was given, he said, to offer a model of teaching "As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household."

Our Father, Who art in heaven.

God would hereby tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him with all boldness and confidence, as children ask their dear father. (Related Bible verses: 1 John 3:1, Romans 8:15, Ephesians 4:6, Galatians 3:26)

Hallowed be Thy name.

God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be holy among us also.

God's name is kept holy when His Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God live holy lives according to it. This grant us, dear Father in heaven! But he who teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches dishonors God's name among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father! (Related Bible verses: John 17:17, Jeremiah 23:28, Ezekiel 22:26, Romans 2:23-24)

Thy Kingdom come.

The kingdom of God certainly comes of itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity. (Related Bible verses: Mark 1:15, Colossians 2:6, Matthew 9:38, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Acts 4:24-30, Luke 12:32, Revelation 22:20)

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

The good and gracious will of God is certainly done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done also among us.

God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow His name nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world and our own flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith until our end. This is His good and gracious will. (Related Bible verses: 1 Timothy 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Acts 14:22, Matthew 16:24, Hebrews 12:6,11, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 2:15-17, Romans 7:8, Romans 16:20, 1 Peter 1:5, Psalm 119:35, 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Give us this day our daily bread.

God certainly gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, God-fearing spouse and children, faithful servants and rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like. (Related Bible verses: Psalm 145:15-16, Matthew 5:45, Ephesians 5:20, Luke 5:1-7, 1 Timothy 6:8, Matthew 6:33-34)

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are not worthy of anything we ask, neither have we deserved it. But we pray that He would give us everything by grace, for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment; and we on our part will heartily forgive and readily do good to those who sin against us. (Related Bible verses: Psalm 19:12, Luke 18:13, Genesis 32:10, Luke 15:21, Matthew 18:21-22, Genesis 50:15-21, Mark 11:25-26, Matthew 18:23-35)

And lead us not into temptation.

God certainly tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world and our own flesh may not deceive us nor lead us into misbelief, despair and other shameful sin and vice; and though we be thus tempted, that we may still in the end overcome and retain the victory. (Related Bible verses: James 1:13-14, 1 Peter 5:8-9, Matthew 18:7, Proverbs 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Ephesians 6:13)

But deliver us from evil.

We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor; and at last, when the hour of death shall come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven. (Related Bible verses: Psalm 91:10, Acts 14:22, Hebrews 12:6, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Job 5:19, 2 Timothy 4:18, Luke 2:29-30, Philippians 1:23)

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. "Amen" means that we should be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by Him; for He himself has commanded us so to pray and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen: that is, Yes, Yes, it shall be so.