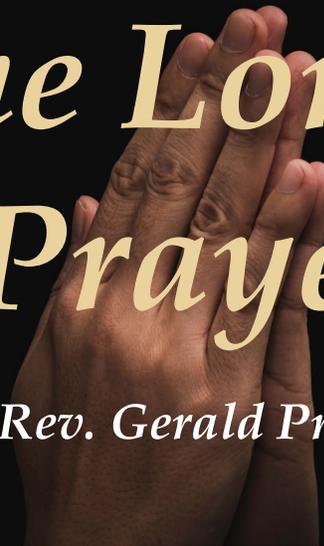


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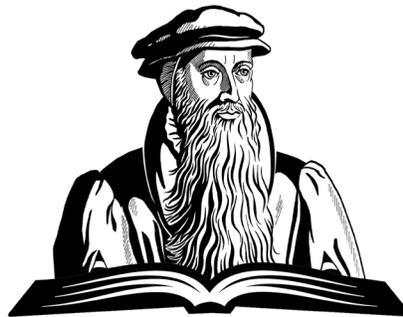


*The Lord's
Prayer*

by Rev. Gerald Procee

Lecture #2

Our Father Which Art in Heaven



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev. Gerald Procee (1953–2024) was a minister of the Gospel, who faithfully served the congregations of Opperdoes, Hamilton, Middelharnis, and Dundas.

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Lord's Prayer

14 Lectures

by Rev. Gerald Procee

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VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Lord's Prayer

by Rev. Gerald Procee

Lecture #2

Our Father Which Art in Heaven

During our first lecture, we considered the biblical foundation for prayer. The Lord Jesus exhorts us repeatedly to pray because God hears prayer. It's through prayer that we are united to the living, powerful, good-doing God, and so the Lord Jesus has given us a format in which we are called to pray, a kind of a model, a kind of a framework, and that's what we find in what we call the Lord's Prayer.

In this prayer, we find the address, how and whom we should address, and that we should pray only to God, the living One. The Bible is very clear that man may only pray to God. The Lord Jesus says it Himself in Matthew 4, "Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (verse 10). This is the echo of what we find in the first commandment of the 10 Commandments given by Moses to the people of Israel, where the Lord says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." We may only pray to God.

Yet we, in our heart, have this inclination to devise and fabricate all kind of gods, things we trust in or people we lay our confidence in. And so, we are by nature inclined to idol worship, and that's a great sin. It's not only people who worship images, that they are called idol worshippers, but also people who live in our modern world, who live in our modern society. Some of us may have money, some of us may have wealth and riches, or certain people we are focusing our attention upon, and we trust in them and actually we worship them as a god. And so, idol worship is a grave sin in the lives of people.

This was also the terrible sin of Israel. In Israel, before the days of the exile, they continually turned to idol worship. After the exile from Babylon, when they came back, we don't read anymore that much about idol worship, but still they worshiped idols. They worshiped themselves, their self-righteousness, and they had their money that they were focused upon. They still had idols. Idol worship is a great sin. We may only worship the Lord God.

Repeatedly the Lord declared to His people that He is their God, and the prophets compare the relationship between the Lord and His people to that of a marriage bond, like love between a husband and a wife. Now a wife cannot have several husbands that she loves. She must only love her faithful, her lawful husband, and so the Lord says unto Israel, "I am your lawful husband; you must serve and worship me." Therefore, they were not allowed to worship other gods, and likewise we may not worship other gods. The Lord God is not a god between other gods. No, He is the only God, and we may only worship the Lord God.

We may not worship saints. We may not worship ancestors, or other people or other things. In some churches they are encouraged to worship images of, let's say Mary or the Lord Jesus, but

we may not worship images either. In certain circles, people call upon angels, and it's even sad to say that some people even worship the devil, but we may only worship God. He is our Maker. He sustains our lives, and He must receive all praise, honor and adoration. We must seek His face, and we are called to trust in Him, for only God can give us everything we need for time and eternity.

As we call upon the Lord God, we must also realize how we call upon the Lord God. We must reverence Him. That is to say, we must address Him with humility, and we must consider Him as the Holy God that we should come before Him, presenting our bodies as living sacrifices that would be holy and acceptable to Him.

As we pray to God, we must first realize Who God is. He is far above our understanding, and yet He reveals Himself in His Word. He reveals Himself as the everlasting, good-doing, loving and compassionate God. God is love; He is full of loving kindness. Loving kindness is a special love and care He has towards His people. We see God's care and loving kindness in the fact that He provides for our needs. You will have experienced many times, how the Lord cared for you, how He answered your prayers, how He gave deliverance out of a certain need, and so we must realize that God is a God of love.

Also, the Lord God is glorious. He is self-sufficient, self-existent. He is so glorious, He doesn't need any other being. He is full of perfection. He dwells in an inaccessible light. His perfections cannot be compared to anything. His nature is for us humans, far beyond our understanding. He is infinitely above us, and so we can say that God is immortal. He is from everlasting to everlasting, and He loves His people with an unchangeable love. The love to His people is constant. It's not affected by their deeds, by their good deeds or by their backsliding. The Lord God has an everlasting, continual, unchanging love for His people, and that's why the Lord will never forsake the works of His hands.

The Lord God is also the Holy God. He is completely righteous, holy, faithful, dedicated to Himself, and so we can rely upon Him. There is no deceit in God. His Word is the truth. He speaks the truth. His judgments are pure. He is the Truth. He is altogether lovely. God is also the Almighty One. God has all power to do all things according to His pleasure, and therefore God is the One Who is not only able to keep us from all danger, but He is also fully able to sustain our lives and to give us what we need for this temporal, daily life.

He is fully able to help us in all our circumstances. He gives us daily food and drink, provides us with clothing. He causes the soil to be fertile, and that the Earth brings forth fruit and that the plants grow. All beings come from His hand. He sustains every living thing, and so He is the Almighty God.

As we address God, we must therefore realize Who He is, and so He is also the All-knowing God. He knows everything about us. He knows your and my needs, and because of the fact that the Lord God is all-knowing, we don't have to carefully explain every detail of our need to Him. He knows it in advance. You know, it is just good for us that we unburden ourselves when we lay our needs before God. It's not that we must inform God about our needs as if He would not know; He knows it all. You may pour out all your needs, and you may empty your heart from all its burdens before the Lord.

The Lord Jesus also tells us that when we pray, we therefore do not have to use long sentences and difficult words and carefully comprised sentences. We may, as a child, call upon God because the Lord Jesus said, "For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matthew 6:8) because He is the All-knowing God.

We must realize that in whatever circumstances we are, He knows exactly everything. In sim-

plicity and in meekness, we may simply lay all our needs before the Lord, and it is good to lay all your needs, the little ones and the big ones, all before the Lord. For the Lord, there is no difference between a big need and a little need because He is Almighty God. Don't be ashamed to lay your little daily needs before the Lord. As a child asks its father for all things it needs, also the simple things, so you also may lay all your needs before the Lord. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" Second Chronicles 16:9.

When we pray to God, we must realize Who God is, and it's not only that He is the Almighty One and that He is the All-knowing One, but He is present everywhere. What a great comfort it is for us that God is everywhere present. Wherever you may be and whatever circumstances you may run into, God will be there. He will guide His people. His people are never alone in whatever circumstances they may be.

You know, we do not realize what may be lying ahead of us, but we do not have to worry because God will be there. To the Lord, all things are open and clear. To Him, the darkness and the light are the same. The Lord knows where we are and what we are doing, and even when His people stray and when there is backsliding, He will lead them back. It may be that He will then chastise His people. He may hurt them so that they will flee back to Him, but because God knows everything, whatever may be the case, we may cry to the Lord and He will hear.

Wherever we are, we are never beyond His reach. What a great comfort to know that God is almighty, all-knowing, and everywhere present. When we see all this, we must realize that that is how we may address the Lord in prayer. What an unfathomable privilege it is that we may so come before God. We're even invited. We're even encouraged to come close to the Lord and to be in His presence. It's an undeserved mercy that we may come before the Almighty and good-doing God.

As we address the Lord God, we must realize Who God is, have some understanding of Who the Lord is, and so we must also realize that He is the God who dwells in heaven, "our Father which art in heaven". We are on the Earth. We are sinners of the dust, and how is it possible that we mortal, sinful people can lay our needs before this almighty and all-glorious God? The answer lies in God's love towards us through the Lord Jesus Christ, because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and the Son of God came into this world to remove every hindrance or impediment between God and man.

Therefore, He had to bear the wrath of God against the whole human race. So, the Lord Jesus opened for us a fresh, a new, a living way to enter unto God, but Jesus Himself, He is the Way. When we call upon God, we must do that in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because He opened the way. God poured out His divine anger upon sin, upon His Son. His Son bore the wrath of God. Let us never forget that God proves His love towards us, that while we were yet sinners, He gave His Son for us to die on the cross (Romans 5:8).

We may address the Lord God through His Son, and then it's good to focus upon the fact that the Lord God is in heaven: "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). It's true the Lord is everywhere present. He knows everything. He sees everything, but heaven is, so to speak, His home. The Bible says that Earth is His footstool; heaven is His dwelling place, His throne (Isaiah 66:1). There He dwells in an inaccessible light, in the presence of His angels, and there they continually praise, worship and adore God.

And so often in the Bible, you're called to look up unto Him. Why to look up? That's a symbolic expression to say that the Lord is in heaven. He is beyond us. He is above us. On the other hand, so often we read that the Lord is asked to look down from heaven. Heaven is the place of glory. It's

the place of everlasting rest. It's a place where all God's people shall be gathered when they leave this life. They will be immediately translated to be there where they belong. They belong to their faithful, loving Father Who drew them, and Who is at work leading them through this life until they one day shall be with Him.

What's now so beautiful about heaven is that there is no sin, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is there, and that everything is holy and glorious there. That's where the tree of life is, and that's where the throne of God is, together with the Lamb and the countless multitude of God's people who have been redeemed from the Earth. Heaven is actually the home of God's children, because what do God's children long for? They long for the Lord: "my soul thirsts for God" (Psalm 42:2). Like the apostle Paul said, "That I may know him," that is Christ," and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

You see, in this life on Earth, we are never finished in realizing Who God is, and learning to know more of God. Isn't it your desire, above all other desires, that you wish to love God with all your heart, with all your soul? Here on Earth, we cannot do that. We are unable to do so, and so we must realize that heaven is the home of God's people. That heaven must be the aim of our life, and therefore let us not live for this present life. It may seem so attractive, but we must live for the life to come, to heaven in glory, with the Lord.

The Lord Jesus shows us here that God is Father. Isn't that a beautiful way to address God? We on our own would never have dared to call God Father. Among the heathens, there's no one who dares to address their God as Father. Father means love and care and consideration, and even self-denial for the wellbeing of children. God is Father so that we would realize how good God is. It is the Lord Jesus especially Who showed us that God is Father because the Lord Jesus Himself dwelled from all eternity, in the bosom of the Father, and He made His love known to us. Christ might have revealed the thoughts and the will of His Father, but He came especially in this world to unveil the heart of God, and that's a heart of love. Here we see the deepest thoughts, and then we hear the most tender words that ever have been uttered, that we may call God Father.

It's not that we should think that the Lord Jesus earned the love of God the Father for us. It's not that God the Father was angry with us, and that the Son then wanted to come to this world, and that He would cause God the Father to change. No. God the Father loved His people from all eternity, and out of love, He gave His Son because He wanted to reconcile these sinners unto Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ, out of love, came into this world to give Himself; and the Holy Spirit, Who was poured out after the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, it is with love that He works in sinner's hearts and reveals Christ to them.

All this flows forth from the love of God the Father. He is the source of all love. He let His Son pay the penalty of sin; and that's an everlasting miracle, a miracle, as long as we live, we will never be able to fathom. That miracle becomes greater the more we learn to approach this Holy, Majestic, and Almighty God with our needs. How can I, as sinner of the dust, come to God with all my needs? That's only possible through the Mediator, because He is the living way to God, and that's how we find the Lord Jesus in the Lord's Prayer.

We sometimes hear that people say you don't find the name of Christ in the Lord's Prayer, and nowhere do we read there that we ask this all in the name of Jesus, but you must understand, this whole Lord's Prayer is only possible through the mediatorial work of Christ. It's only because of Him that we may pray these petitions to the Lord. Throughout the whole of the Lord's Prayer, we see Christ. We may address God as our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the Lord Jesus, it would be blasphemy for us to say that God is our Father, for we have sinned grievously

against Him.

And so, when a sinner on Earth flees to the Lord God in prayer, that is only possible through the finished work of Christ Jesus. He earned that access to God, and He earned that because He Himself was cut off from that access to God. When He was on the cross, He was cast out of the presence of God, and there He was in outer darkness and He cried out to His God, but His God did not hear Him. He had no access to God. He was in outer darkness, and that is where you and I belong to be forever, but He took the place of all those who trust in Him. And through Him, we may now pray to God and expect, by grace, God's mercy and care for us.

The Lord Jesus instructs us here to say, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9), but you know, in order to say that truly, "our Father," we personally must be connected to Christ. He is the Way. He is the Truth. He is the Life. It's only through the Lord Jesus that a man has access to God (John 14:6). And so, we need to know the Lord Jesus Christ personally as our Mediator. Outside of Christ, we cannot approach God.

When we do not know Christ as our Savior, then we may be afraid of God, and then I will be just like the heathens. They view their gods as tyrants, and these heathens, they try to appease their gods. They try to buy their favor, and that's how you view God if you are still outside of Christ. The heathens will only come to their gods when they cannot help themselves anymore, and that's how it is with a person outside of Christ. He does not care about God, only when he is in trouble, then he will try to do things to earn some favor of God.

The reality is that by nature, we are enemies of God, and we refuse to bow for His authority. It's only by regeneration that sinners are adopted to be sons of God. Because of our sins and rebellion against God, we cannot just assume and just say that God is our Father. We find a beautiful example of that in the parable of the prodigal son, the lost son who left his father, and who spent all the goods of his father in a faraway country. Then when he was in poverty, he realized how good his father was, and how he had shamefully misbehaved himself against his father. The prodigal son desired to go back to his father. He still calls him "father," but he realizes that he is not worthy to be called his son, and so we read in Luke 15, verse 18 and 19, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.'"

This prodigal son is actually our image. We have forsaken God the Father. We have shamefully misbehaved ourselves; and just as the prodigal son gave up his right to be a son of his father, likewise when a sinner is convicted of his sins and his own unworthiness, he will also say, "I am not worthy to be called Thy son." Because what is now their sin? It is rebellion against God. It's wanting to be as God. It's wishing that God would not even exist, and that we could be our own God and do as we please. We wish to cast God from His throne. That's how grievous, how awful our sins are. Then the Lord Jesus tells us to address God as our Father, because the house of the Father is still open for runaway children of Adam. The Lord Jesus calls us to show reverence and trust, but also humility when we come before the Lord God.

Have you seen in your life, this natural inclination to go against God? Have you realized in your life that you are not worthy to be called a child of God, and that you are also not worthy to call God your Father? This is such a miracle, that unworthy people are still invited to come to the house of God the Father. They are still welcome to come home again, and that's the miracle of God's love. There at His feet, you will be overwhelmed by His love, that He's still willing to have you, regardless of what you have done. That He is still willing to be a loving Father in Christ, and then His Holy Spirit teaches you to pray "Abba, Father." And you join in with God's children, and

together with His Church, you pray, “Our Father which art in heaven.”

This humble attitude, this trusting attitude, this attitude of reverence to God characterizes true prayer. Just like a child respects its parents and trusts them, so we may also trust and respect and have reverence towards the Lord God. We are not to be too rash in coming before the Holy One. We are not to address God in an irreverent manner. He is still the High One who dwells in heaven. The Lord Jesus says, “Our Father which art in heaven;” that shows the distance. God is in heaven, and yet at the same time, He is close. We are called, not to keep distance, but to come close to God, with anticipation that God is willing to hear us because of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reverence teaches us to bow before God because of His holiness and majesty, and confidence teaches us to draw nigh to God, to come close to Him, hoping upon His goodness and faithfulness, and being encouraged by His power. For Jesus’ sake, I may pray like a child who would ask something of his father, and so we may enter into the palace of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), and we may come before His holy throne and speak to him as a child speaks to its father.

When the Lord Jesus tells us to pray “our Father”, it is that we may look to God with child-like fear, reverence and expectation, and so this is actually the foundation of prayer. “Our Father which art in heaven,” that actually portrays the basis, the foundation of prayer, and that you may be comforted and encouraged that for all things of this life, your heavenly Father will take care of you and will provide for you. For God will much less deny us what we ask of Him in true faith than our parents will refuse us earthly things.

Isn’t this a blessed illustration? A child asking something from his father knowing that he needs something, knowing that his father will not refuse him. Father will help me. Even when a father does not give certain things to his child, then a trusting child will not complain, but will realize that father knows best. That’s how the life of faith is as well. Faith lives in trust that God will not withhold any good thing from me that I may need in my life. When something is withheld from me, then I may still trust that the Lord knows what is best for me, and that all things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Then I may not know why certain things happen to me, but if this God, Who proves His love by giving His Son for me, if He withholds something from me, then I may trust that He will be faithful. He is far wiser than I am. I am but a foolish child, and His “No” is far wiser than my “Yes,” and so I learn to lay down all my cares before Him, and His Spirit gives me grace and confidence to leave all these cares before Him, and I may have good courage that He will give me all things I stand in need of.

Then finally, there’s one aspect left of this beautiful first address in this Lord’s Prayer, and that is something that we find in the expression “our,” “our Father.” The Lord Jesus did not tell us to pray “my Father” but “our Father.” This shows that all God’s children are together in this prayer. We are not just individuals who individually pray and ask God certain matters, but all God’s children, they form a body, they form a unity, and so we are to pray together with others around us, and we are to remember others around us in our prayer. Because there should be a special bond between all those who love and fear the Lord. They are united in Christ, and so they pray together, for one another and with one another, they pray “our Father.”

The expression “our Father” shows us then the need to pray for one another, and so this petition lifts us up in the presence of God, but we are not alone there. We are there together with others, and all God’s children from all time, all days, from all ages, they are united together in this one prayer, “Our Father which art in heaven.” How blessed that your God is your Father in heaven. How hap-

py you are to be children of such a Father in heaven. Never are you to be pitied in this world with such a Father Who will help you, Who will care for you, Who will lead you, Who will hold onto you. In life and in death, He will lead you further. You are very blessed with such a Father. Trust then in “our Father which art in heaven.” Thank you.