

Exegesis of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:5-13 and the Implications

Tita Delila Tukunang¹

tita.tukunang@sttbk.ac.id¹

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Kalvari, Indonesia¹

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Abstract

Humans frequently engage in the act of praying. Those who hold religious beliefs and faith are likely to pray on a daily basis. Typically, when people pray, they make requests or express their thoughts to their Creator. Prayer is commonly perceived as a way to communicate with God. During prayer, individuals speak and interact with God, anticipating a response. Consequently, prayer is not an unfamiliar or unusual practice for humans since it involves speaking directly to God. This qualitative research study aims to explore the role of prayer in the spiritual lives of Christian believers using a Bible exegetical approach, in particular the Lord's Prayer. The research utilizes the extensive knowledge and background of biblical passages in Matthew 6:5-13 that are connected to prayer with the objective of understanding the beliefs, practices, and experiences of Christian believers. Findings reveal that prayer plays a significant role in the spiritual lives of Christian believers, providing a means of communication with God, fostering a sense of intimacy and relationship with God, and serving as a source of comfort, guidance, and empowerment.

Keywords: *Context, Purpose of Writing, Analysis of Matthew*

I. INTRODUCTION

Prayer is usually a central part of religious life and believers. But the question is whether in religious life prayer is only understood as an act or activity in which a person expresses his or her words to God, or simply as talking to God by conveying his or her desires in the form of requests. If so, then prayer becomes something in which a person talks with his friends or family to express what is on his mind.

Prayer in the Christian tradition is generally associated with the prayer taught by Jesus himself, the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer has become a commonly used prayer in the worship life of Christians, both in church and in Christian families. But is the Lord's Prayer also just a common prayer recited by Christians or is there something deeper about our relationship with God in prayer? What exactly is a prayer and what are its implications in Christian life? Through this paper, the author will try to look at the expressions in the Lord's Prayer and how to find the essence of prayer itself. The author will look at it based on the approach of the book of Matthew 6:5-13.

II. METHODOLOGY

This scientific study will employ a qualitative research approach to gain a comprehensive understanding and solve the problem under investigation. Initially, relevant data will be collected, and the Bible will serve as the primary basis for the research and analysis. By utilizing the technique of Bible exegesis, the author will examine the historical context, conduct a literature review, and scrutinize the terminology used in the text. The author reflects on the implications of the analysis and interpretation for the research question and for the broader field of theology. This may involve drawing conclusions, developing new theories or frameworks, or suggesting practical applications for the findings. This method is commonly used in theology to understand the beliefs, practices, and experiences of individuals and communities within a religious context.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Context

When studying the four gospels, it is important to note that each of these books was written with different expressions. However, all of them are believed to be the infallible Word of God and have authority in writing and content. When comparing the four gospels, the author found several differences in them, starting from differences in emphasis, presentation, and arrangement, differences in the prioritization of ministry, the apostolic point of view, and finally the purpose of writing. The author details the results of the comparison of Matthew as follows (Class Notes for New Testament Survey 1, STTBK 2014): in terms of emphasis, the Gospel of Matthew emphasizes “The Repentance and the Kingdom of God.” It is the core of Matthew’s Gospel proclamation. It is written for Jewish Christians as the original recipients in connection with the Kingdom of God program. In terms of presentation, Matthew shows Christ as the king of Israel. In terms of the arrangement, Matthew emphasizes dispensational organization. In this regard, Matthew packs his organization from the Old Testament into his writing, contrasting with the pattern of “greater than” (Class Notes for Advanced New Testament, STTBK 2020). The next term is on the primacy of service. In the ministry of Jesus, Matthew emphasized the primacy of the long service performed by the Lord Jesus. Furthermore, in terms of the apostolic perspective, the Gospel of Matthew is obviously seen from Matthew’s own perspective. He wrote this book and in Jesus’ ministry, he was with Jesus as a disciple.

3.2 Purpose of Writing

The primary aim of the Gospel of Matthew is to communicate to Israel that Jesus is the Messiah, emphasizing that Jesus is the one whom God sent to restore Israel from exile and to extend the Kingdom of God to the Gentiles. Matthew’s gospel portrays Jesus as the king, and it was initially directed toward the Jewish audience. By comparing Matthew’s gospel with other gospels, it becomes apparent that the main purpose of writing the Gospel of Matthew is to declare to Israel that Jesus is the Messiah, emphasizing that he is the one whom God has sent to redeem Israel from exile and include the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God.

3.3 Analysis of Matthew 6:5-13

The author examines the subject of Matthew 6:5-13, which is titled “Things to Pray For” by the Indonesian Bible Institute (LAI). This analysis involves a word study and a grammatical analysis of the passage. To conduct this analysis, the author refers to several resources, such as Strong’s Dictionaries of Greek available on e-Sword, the Indonesian translation provided by the Indonesian Bible Institute, and the King James Version in English.

Please note that Matthew 6:5-13 cannot be separated from the previous passages because it has an outline that is continuous and related to one another. The outline of Matthew 1:1-7:29 can be described as follows: (a) Chapters 1:1-4:11 describe the identity of the king who has roots in the chosen people and can be traced; (b) Chapter 4:12-22 presents the transition of the identity of the Lord Jesus’ ministry. In His ministry, Jesus conveyed many teachings with an emphasis on repentance and the Kingdom of God as the core of Matthew’s Gospel preaching; (c) Chapter 4:23-25 shows that Jesus is running or organizing His reign (especially in verse 23) by traveling around. Jesus emphasized two aspects in his teachings: the dissemination of His message through His word, and the establishment of His Kingdom through His actions in the world; (d) Chapters 5:1-7:29 show that it was in these chapters that Jesus organized His first reign, through His word. He went around with His reign through words or teaching. These chapters are known as the Sermon on the Mount. The content of the Sermon on the Mount is intended for the children of God’s kingdom as “a way of life,” (the basis of verse 5:1-16). The mindset that the children of the kingdom should adopt is one that enables them to live according to the truth revealed by the Lord Jesus. This way of life is intrinsic to the children of God, and it is not a means of achieving salvation (Class Note Advanced New Testament, STTBK 2020). The outlines are helpful in analyzing the passage of “The Lord’s Prayer” and it is clear that “The Lord’s Prayer” was given when the Lord Jesus was teaching the Sermon on the Mount.

3.3.1 Matthew 6:5-6

In these verses, Jesus pointed out the issues he had with some forms of Jewish prayer. He told his followers at the time not to be “hypocrites.” In this passage, it is clear that people are hypocrites because of the motives of their hearts. Particular emphasis was placed on the religious leaders who liked to say their prayers standing in the synagogues and at the corners of the highways so that they would be seen by the people.

The previous discussion of the author has touched on the Sermon on the Mount related to verses 1-16, where this passage shows the way of life of the children of the kingdom of God who have a good attitude, namely doing everything really comes from the heart. What the Lord Jesus has taught He wants it to be in us (to be intrinsic). Therefore, when someone prays, it must really come from the heart as children of the kingdom. Thus, this is the teaching and criticism given by Jesus in verses 5-6, because their motivation seems to be only limited to their desire to be highly regarded by others in order to appear pious, not out of their hearts. That is why in the next verse, Jesus instructs them to pray in a hidden place.

3.3.2 Matthew 6:7-8

Furthermore, Jesus also criticized them not to pray in a long-winded manner. In Greek, the word is βαρβαλογήσητε. It has the root word βαρρος, which means stammering and repetitive speech that is boring. They did this because they thought

they would be heard because of the many words they used. Furthermore, Jesus urged us not to be like those who prayed this way. For they clearly do not have the knowledge of God (verse 8). But in this verse, the children who are in the kingdom are children who know God. So their way of life should come out of their hearts in terms of praying as mentioned earlier. Because in the end, Jesus showed that the Father knows what they need before they ask the Father.

Thus, from verses 7-8, the emphasis is again on how children of the kingdom of God who have Christ in their lives should be able to position themselves to pray according to what comes out of the heart. For that is how the children of the kingdom of God should live.

3.3.3 Matthew 6:9-13

In verse 9 the Lord Jesus began to teach how to pray. The first word is Father in heaven, indicating the closeness of God's children to the Father, thus calling him Father. While the expression in heaven points to the power and transcendence of God. He is so great that, as Father, He does not dwell in this world; rather, He transcends it, dwelling in heaven.

Furthermore, in the statement "Hallowed be Your name," the author sees that there is an implied message in it that shows the existence of God who is holy. Then, followed by "your kingdom come." It is obvious that this passage is referring to God. The key term is βασιλεία "kingdom," which has a meaning that it refers to the authority to rule. In addition, the word βασιλεία is not only a kingdom, but also an "act of ruling" (Danker and Bauer). In other words, it sounds like asking God to impose His authority for the kingdom to come.

Meyers comments on the strict similarity between the kingdom of God and the longing for the Messiah (Mk 11:9-10). This longing is described as "the supreme object of godly longing" (Meyer:2007). Further in the context of this verse, it could refer to the desire of Jesus' disciples to see the world evangelized and the lost saved, i.e., for God's rule and authority to come over people's lives at that time (Pennington: 2008). This passage makes it clear that "The Lord's Prayer" is a prayer that was taught by Jesus, and it emphasizes the essential elements of the children of God's Kingdom. This is evident from the previous context of the passage, which describes Jesus' teachings on how the children of the Kingdom should live. As this prayer is intended for the children of the kingdom, who are under the authority of God's government, the author concludes that it serves as their guide for living and centers on God's authority in governing His people.

3.4 Terminology of the Lord's Prayer

Ayat 9: hallowed be thy name

Part of Speech: Verb, Tense: Aorist, Voice: Passive, Mood: Imperative, Person: third (he/she/it), Number: singular

Ayat 10: The Kingdom Comes

Part of Speech: Verb, Tense: Second Aorist, Voice: Active, Mood: Imperative, Person: second (you), Number: singular

Ayat 11: Give Me Today

Part of Speech: Verb, Tense: Second Aorist, Voice: Active, Mood: Imperative,
Person: second (you), Number: singular

Ayat 12: leave our debts as

Part of Speech: Verb, Tense: Second Aorist, Voice: Active, Mood: Imperative,
Person: second (you), Number: singular

Ayat 13: Tell us from

Part of Speech: Verb, Tense: Aorist, Voice: Middle deponent, Mood: Imperative,
Person: second (you), Number: singular

Notice the imperative mood part of each prayer shown by the Lord Jesus to His disciples. Any imperative mood in this sentence means that the sentence expresses a command or instruction to do something. In translation, the imperative is “a command”. In the context of Matthew, it is clear that the word “sanctified” is not a compliment but an imperative (command). The directive in this passage is oriented from the lower level to the higher level, rather than the other way around. It should be noted in the use of this sentence, that from the bottom up is a request but from the top down is a command (Class Note of Advanced New Testament. STTBK, 2020).

Since the imperative is from the bottom up in the Lord’s Prayer, it is interpreted as “pleading strongly or asking strongly, with respect from the bottom up. Therefore, the Lord’s Prayer should be “Father we beseech/ask earnestly hallowed be thy name, Father we beseech/ask earnestly thy kingdom come.” Therefore, ask God that what is in heaven also happens on earth. The question then arises as to how the Father sanctifies His name, in Matthew’s context by bringing or restoring His kingdom. This passage is synonymous with God’s kingdom and will. Consequently, the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer is to “respectfully ask for God’s work to come.” Thus, prayer is not a wordy thing. It does not contain confessions, nor is it praise. Prayer is asking God with a good heart attitude that is with respect to God.

3.5 Implications of Prayer and How Believers Should Pray

For most people, prayer is their means of communication with God. Thus, they understand that prayer aims to elevate one’s mind and heart to God by talking to God like a friend (Saint Mary’s Press: 2015). Based on the idea of regarding God as a friend, certain groups believe that they can manipulate God by their will. They tend to assert their authority over God and “command” or “claim” Him in their lives. However, they fail to realize that God cannot be controlled like a slave, as He is not subject to human authority.

Given our prior conclusion that prayer involves earnestly requesting or pleading, it follows that believers should ask God for what they desire. As members of God’s kingdom, they have been given an open invitation and access to approach Him. However, it is important not to misconstrue this invitation as a means of controlling God. Rather, believers should approach God with humility and reverence, asking for their needs to be met in accordance with His teachings. Careless or thoughtless requests are not what God desires from His people.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, prayer is commonly regarded as a form of communication with God that involves elevating one's mind and heart to Him through conversation as with a friend. However, some people mistakenly believe that they can control God and bend His will to their own desires. It is crucial to understand that God is not subjected to human authority. Instead, believers are encouraged to approach God with respect and submission, seeking to align their desires with His teachings. By doing so, they can find fulfillment in their prayers and deepen their relationship with God.

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